



A black and white photograph of Louis Jouvet, an elderly man with a serious expression, looking slightly to the right. He is wearing a dark, heavy jacket over a light-colored, patterned shirt with a large, loose collar. The background is dark and textured, possibly a curtain or a wall. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his face and the texture of his clothing.

# **Louis Jouvet**

**MAN OF THE THEATRE**

**By BETTINA LIEBOWITZ KNAPP**

**Foreword by Michael Redgrave**

Second Printing

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MAN

## *Louis Jouvet*

### *MAN OF THE THEATRE*

*By Bettina Liebowitz Knapp*

A master of acting, directing, and producing, Louis Jouvet is one of the great figures of the modern theatre. From the perspective of five years after his death, Mrs. Knapp has produced the first full-length biography in English of this dynamic personality, a book for all those interested in the theatre, professionally or otherwise.

During his early years Jouvet did the manual tasks of the theatre—from simple carpentry to the intricate construction and painting of sets. He first gained attention for his skillful creation of lighting effects in Jacques Copeau's Vieux-Colombier productions. Thereafter branching out in all departments, he soon distinguished himself for his comprehensive and practical knowledge of the theatre.

Mrs. Knapp explains: "Jouvet recoiled from drawing up fixed sets of rules to which actors must adhere. He felt such rules could only hamper the creative expression of the actor. He therefore approached a script with all his sensibili-

*(Continued on back flap)*

*Jacket photo - Lipnitzki*

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*Louis Jouvet*

**MAN OF THE THEATRE**







Photo Lipnitzki

Louis Jouvet in Molière's *Dom Juan*

# *Louis Jouvet*

## *MAN OF THE THEATRE*

*Bettina Liebowitz Knapp*

*WITH A FOREWORD BY MICHAEL REDGRAVE*

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*TO MY HUSBAND*

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## *Foreword*

With a few honourable and notable exceptions—do we need to mention Shakespeare and Molière?—the history of the theatre records until this century few actors who could claim with any distinction the title of *homme du théâtre*. Of this era and in this small and perhaps equivocal category Louis Jouvot was not only in the first rank; he was a leader among leaders. Other modern actors have sealed their claim to fame by their allegiance to the playwright and the playwright's word, which is the lifeblood of the theatre, but Louis Jouvot was the shining example of all that is best in this essentially modern and in some quarters despised practice, this search for balance between the creative and the interpretative and the managerial. The true *homme du théâtre* has in him a powerful fusion of all three qualities. He is, as the author of this book remarks, a Renaissance man.

If you accept that title, the "Renaissance man" had or has a fusion of talents which most critics and devotees of the theatre, whose approach is primarily a romantic approach, distrust. Such critics think that Coleridge's celebrated verdict on Kean acting Shakespeare "by flashes of lightning" is an

encomium, whereas, if rightly read in its context, it is a succinct criticism.

Let me say immediately that I do not know how good an actor Jouvét was. Let me add, as an actor, that one can never know that of any actor, with any certainty, until one has worked with him. I saw him many times on the screen, where he could hold the attention of audiences who in some far-flung cinemas did not understand the words issuing from the saturnine mouth, words which were often too impoverished to express the mind which shone through the intense but often withdrawn eyes. My own overall memory of those eyes is that they were critical but passionate, always in control, never cold.

When I saw him on the stage, which was only once, in his "magic play," *Dr. Knock*, I was student in the Touraine, with no means to see the gamut of the contemporary French theatre, and too undeveloped to realize the significance of much more than a striking personality and an exemplary technique. Exemplary is perhaps the wrong word. Jouvét's technique, though it owed much to the basic principles of acting (and those principles are, if anyone is in doubt, quite simply based on the ability to act), was, as with many actors of the front rank, highly individual and empiric, a fact which this book makes clear. It is more than interesting to me, as an actor of another race and a later decade, to remember and to have confirmed that Jouvét gave a prime importance to the weight and meaning of the dramatist's word and, therefore, to the speaking of it. Jouvét has been criticized in my hearing as an elocutionist, a pedant, and a schoolteacher. The first epithet needs little defence; better an excess of clarity than confusion. Pedant and schoolteacher are the common terms of contempt used by the lazy or the dull, with whom Jouvét, who was a reformer as well as an artist, had little patience. These epithets lose their sting when applied to a true actor and *homme du théâtre*, and in these days when

the eccentric, subjective, the wild and—in a word—selfish performance often wins very high acclaim, it is a good thing to remember that here was an actor and a mentor who believed that the playwright's word was the playwright's bond and the actor's brief.

It is also no bad thing to remember, and the thought is not entirely sentimental, that the great figures of the past also had their troubles, a fact which this book most clearly demonstrates. Jovet in his writings reiterates the conclusion that was forced on him by the hard facts of the theatre: "Le seul problème du théâtre, c'est le succès"—a very different statement, let it be affirmed, from the Broadway motto: "The box-office never lies."

It is a common and easy assumption that, when a great figure leaves us, his cares and vexations precipitate to the bottom of his cup of success, where the sediment is scarcely noted. Garrick's setbacks and vexations may fall like dry powder from his wig. The financial stresses of Irving are forgotten in the legend of the Lyceum. The image of Bernhardt in Paris in the 1890's, when her career was in full flood, evokes for us a *tout Paris* flocking each night to see her and to hear the *voix d'or* caress and reverberate around the walls of the little Théâtre de la Renaissance, from which, after a brief tenancy, she had to *filer* to the Americas to recoup two million gold francs of debt. The glory of Molière blinds us to the fact that he wrote *Le Malade Imaginaire*—of all plays—while mortally ill and that, to this day, his grave is unknown. It is not inadvertently that I conjure up the great name of Molière with the name of Jovet, for I think there could be no prouder or more logical connection between two men of genius. I believe it to be justly said in this book that Jovet treated Molière as a contemporary and an intimate. How do I know this? An actor of another country and generation, who saw Jovet but once on the stage, how can I possibly know this? It is not enough to say that I knew it the moment I saw him,



and other documents. My meetings and discussions with them made the gathering of information for this dissertation, to say the least, most pleasant. Particular thanks go to Miss Monval of the Rondel Theatrical collection of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal; to the Bibliothèque Nationale and to the Association des Régisseurs de Théâtre.

I would like to thank the members of the French Department of Columbia University for their help and guidance; more particularly, Professors Justin O'Brien, Jean Hytier, Bert Leefmans, Lawton P. Peckham, Norman L. Torrey, Philip R. Sisson and Jeanne Pleasants; the Columbia University Libraries; and my friends and acquaintances, Mr. Eugene J. Sheffer, Mrs. Elise Bani, Mrs. Béatrix Sisson, Professor Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, Dr. Alba-Marie Fazia, Dr. Alice V. Griffin, Miss Maya Pines; Miss Else Pinthus, Mr. Herbert J. Seligmann and Mrs. Utako Inoue.

The editors of *La Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre* most kindly gave me permission to use their painstakingly gleaned information for the table on the career of Louis Jouvét in the Appendix and the generous cooperation of the Lipnitski Studios of Paris made possible the illustrations in this book.

I am deeply indebted to Mr. Michael Redgrave, who graciously took time out from a crowded schedule of stage, motion picture, and television commitments to write the Foreword. If I may be permitted to speak for Jouvét as well as myself—we are both highly honored.

My thanks and appreciation go to my parents, David Liebowitz and Emily Gresser Liebowitz, for their constant aid and encouragement; and above all, to my husband, Russell S. Knapp.

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Blanchar

As Tartuffe

In *Dom Juan* (with the statue of The Commande)

# ***1***

## ***The Forming of an Artist***



## *The Youth and the Apprentice*

### *1887-1912*

*All my childhood fancies, my dreams, and my reveries, were effortlessly prolonged here with delight, and the fears of the future failed to trouble me. Setting foot on this stage, as wretched as I might be, would suffice to make me happy; I would always find felicity there.<sup>1</sup>*

Excitement and tension ran high, for this was an important occasion. The curtains parted and the play began. As Doctor Knock, Louis Jouvét wore no disguise or mask, merely a pair of metal spectacles over his pendulous nose. His hair was tightly combed back, revealing a large and striking forehead. He appeared tall, thin and bony; and his eyes, somewhat distorted by his grotesque glasses, had a piercing look. His speech was brusque and incisive; his tone that of a cocksure, opinionated man. As the play progressed, he revealed interesting mannerisms, such as rubbing his hands together, bestowing oblique looks at individuals to indicate judicious consideration, or using protracted silences to suggest wise reflection and attitudes of observation. Lastly, his gigantic steps had a touch of the grotesque.<sup>2</sup> When Dr. Knock examined his patients, his expression remained impassive and mysterious, as fateful as

destiny. He frightened them with strange and startling glances; his protruding chin suggested extreme force of character, and when the audience observed him closely, a magnetic dynamism was manifest in his manner. It was at these moments that Dr. Knock could hypnotize his patients into a serious sickness and so establish an immensely profitable practice, based on cleverness, chicanery, knowledge of human weaknesses, and coldly calculating ambition.

When the curtains came together, André Gide, carried away with enthusiasm, ran on to the stage to congratulate Jouvét,<sup>3</sup> while the entire audience burst into a round of applause. The year was 1923. This was Jouvét's first success and a well-deserved one. The road leading to it, however, had been painful and arduous. Nothing had come easily to Jouvét. He had been forced to overcome not only physical defects, such as his stutter, but emotional and moral problems as well.

Jouvét's stuttering was to manifest itself early in his life. During the formative and highly impressionable years of his youth, the neighbors' children poked fun at him and even his two older brothers, Edmond and Gustave, chided him because of this handicap. Born at Crozon in the Finistère, on December 24, 1887, the boy was only four when he made the first of his many trips with his father. Monsieur Jouvét, a civil engineer, often would take the family with him when he was sent on certain jobs that necessitated his traveling from one part of France to another. In many ways though the boy took after his mother more than his father. His mother possessed great will power, dignity, and an intensity and perseverance, characteristics which she passed on to her son, Louis.

At the age of eight, Jouvét began reading the *Morceaux Choisis* of Molière. Although he did not know who Molière was, nor when he had lived, he devoured the plays, even reading the footnotes with passion. He was so impressed by Molière that he and some friends quoted phrases back and forth as a game. During recreation periods, when oftentimes the wheel-



wright's son tried to bully them, he and his friends would reply with quotations from Molière suitable to the occasion. "I am talking to myself . . . I could certainly put a bee in your bonnet! . . . If the cap fits, wear it!" or "rascals," "master swindlers," "knaves," "real gallows birds," and so on.<sup>4</sup>

But, unfortunately, these relatively happy days in the country schools, among good companions or in solitude, did not last long. On January 20, 1902, the accidental death of his father<sup>5</sup> caused Louis to experience his first great sorrow. At the end of the year, Mme Jouvét and her children moved to Rethel in the Ardennes, to join her family. In this hilly and forested town, situated midway between Paris and Belgium, young Louis was to finish his secondary schooling.

As an adolescent, Louis was tall, ungainly, and rather awkward. His face had narrow sharp lines and was not at all attractive. Indications of intelligence, a strong will, and persistence, but also contradictory traits of hesitation, doubt, insecurity, and some fear of life itself were revealed in his physiognomy. An avid reader, Louis forgot his fears and escaped from the world of reality to that of fancy in the solitude of his room and his books.

During the years that young Jouvét lived with his mother's family, he enjoyed a very close relationship with his maternal grandmother, a thin and small, bent and almost blind woman, wrinkled with age. But she was a warm, sympathetic, and encouraging influence compared with the repressive nature of the other members of the family. As Jouvét sat in the homey atmosphere of her large sunny kitchen amidst lingering aromas of jams, meats, fruits, and baking bread, the boy enjoyed confiding his aspirations to her.<sup>6</sup>

It was in Rethel, at the age of fifteen, that he was first offered an opportunity to display his talents as an actor. Unlike other French schools, Notre-Dame de Rethel had its own small theatre on the Place d'Artois, a theatre which had been built in 1891 and inaugurated with the production of Bornier's

*La Fille de Roland*. Fortunately for Louis, the school's canon provost was a remarkable man with a modern outlook. He was convinced that acting was a necessary corollary to literary training, and, as part of the curriculum, every student had to memorize one act from a classical play and recite it before the class.<sup>7</sup> At the end of the year, the most talented were chosen to perform before the invited parents and guests.<sup>8</sup>

Such early speech training was excellent for Jouvét, since it forced him to control his articulation. Applying all his will power to speaking his lines very slowly, he tried to overcome his hesitation and conceal his embarrassment. In this he was only partially successful; he never could quite overcome his handicap. Later on he learned to disguise and partially offset it by adopting a special manner of speech.

When his mother realized that his theatrical ambition had to be taken seriously, she was appalled; for to such old-fashioned pious folk, the stage was a sinful place. Great pressure was put on him to accept family tradition and middle-class common sense. He would stand silent, hands in pockets, fumbling with some small pebbles he had collected, listening to his mother and her brothers trying to dissuade him. He kept his thoughts to himself, but the more his family tried to thwart him, the firmer the hold his ambition took on him; he was going to be an actor and spend the rest of his life in the theatre.

For Jouvét was convinced that he had a call, despite his speech defect and his ungainliness. When he left his grandmother in the kitchen for the retreat of his room, he read and dreamed about the lives of such famous actors as Molière and Talma, and felt a secret kinship with them. But all this was in the realm of wishful thinking; when facing reality, he was disturbed by a crippling sense of insecurity. This lack of faith in himself was to dog him, more or less, all his life. The theatre was truly a way of escape for him and a way of disguising himself, of assuming many characters or becoming

many selves; or perhaps, unconsciously, he hoped to resolve his conflicts by giving vent to them on stage. Psychologically, he was not only seeking a profession, but also a way to his own personal salvation.

It was not too long, though, before Jouvét bowed to his mother's suggestion that he spend his summer vacations with his uncle Jules at Rheims. His uncle's household, a good deal like his grandmother's, was dignified, simple, and pious. Young Louis would often accompany his uncle, a doctor, on his farm calls. Both loved to wander over the broad countryside and linger in the burgeoning fields; when fatigued, they would sit under shade trees, where the view overlooked the valley, or perhaps beside a secluded stream. His uncle would speak wise words on plant and animal life and Louis was an absorbed listener. His curiosity had long been awakened to all forms of life about him: human, vegetable, and animal. This omnivorous passion for life contributed much to his evolution into an artist. He was still young enough to take a keen interest in nature. On their way home, Louis' uncle would reveal the real purpose of these excursions—to mold him and convince him to give up his strong-headed ideas. But no amount of cajoling could influence the young man's decision. On the other hand, he was a reasonable and loyal son, and at this critical period, he reiterated that out of respect for his family he would continue his scientific studies and eventually attend the school of pharmacy in Paris.<sup>9</sup> Something else attracted him to Paris—the theatre. But this he never mentioned.

At the age of eighteen, on July 11, 1905, Louis Jouvét received his baccalaureate and promptly enrolled, as he had promised, in the school of pharmacy. However, he discovered that he had to work for two years as an assistant to a pharmacist before he could matriculate. His pay would be seven francs a day, a meager salary on which to live.<sup>10</sup> It was not an unlucky twist of fate though that led him to pharmacy, for his ex-

perience as a pharmacist put him in contact with all sorts of people, making it possible for him to learn of and witness the large and petty dramas of a provincial town. It was at this juncture that definite traits of character manifested themselves—studious and unwavering integrity, loyalty to his profession and to his family.

On July 8, 1909, he passed his final examinations and received the *mention très bien*.<sup>11</sup> The next move was to Paris, away from the provinces to the heart of the civilized world. There his passion for the theatre was rekindled. He devoted his leisure hours to the study of acting; he studied pharmacy out of a sense of duty, but acting at the prompting of his heart. He thought he could manage both, but his ambition seemed to be in inverse proportion to his apparent gifts as an actor and man of the theatre. However, not once during the whole course of his career was Jouvet deterred by his handicaps, which would have discouraged anyone less persistent and courageous.

Paris was the city in which art took on an almost fervid and religious importance, with many rival sects attacking and belittling one another. It was a vastly stimulating Paris, the world center of the arts, whose magnetic force drew Picasso and Gris from Spain, Pascin from Bulgaria, and Modigliani from Italy, all to be nourished by the richness of a soil that had been turned over throughout the centuries by France's great painters and sculptors. It was also the Paris of the theatrical innovators, of Antoine with the *Théâtre Libre* and Lugné-Poë with his *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre*, the first following the course of complete naturalism and the second that of idealistic symbolism.

Antoine, acutely aware and percipient, a strong personality, was dismayed by the unresponsiveness of the stage to the trends of the times. He strove through the theatre to bring people face to face with themselves and with their environment. Antoine understood that the theatrical arts must follow the

patterns of reality. Actors and actresses had to walk and talk and comport themselves on stage as people did in shops, on the streets, in the subway, and in their homes if they were to mirror life with fidelity; a smudged mirror perhaps, but recognizable all the same, offering audiences the pleasure of recognition.

What Antoine actually accomplished was the creation of a peephole theatre, permitting audiences to partake of a slice of life. He became the foremost sponsor of photographic reality and almost always used real life props in his productions. When he produced *Blanchette* by Brieux, he used real accessories—a counter, a work basket, a novel, a pipe, tobacco, and so on. On stage he built real stores, actual bistros, butcher shops, and neighborhood slums.<sup>12</sup>

As was to be expected, a counter tendency soon set in; Paul Fort and Lugné-Poë were among the first to react. At the age of eighteen, in 1890, Paul Fort founded the Théâtre Mixte, which he later called the Théâtre d'Art. This was to be a poetic and idealistic theatre which was to restore horizons and free the mind from a burdensome preoccupation with everyday events. The camera was withdrawn in favor of spontaneous vision. Influenced by Moréas, Verlaine, and Régnier, Fort called upon such symbolist painters as Vuillard, Roussel, Bonnard, and Redon to design his scenery.

Lugné-Poë inaugurated his own theatre, the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, on May 17, 1893. Instead of passively reflecting the patterns of reality, he permitted his fancies to roam. His technique created an aura about people and events and favored the spiritual and abstracting tendencies of the arts of the time. Both he and Paul Fort agreed that stage settings should avoid the literal in favor of the abstract and suggestive. This meant, in terms of the theatre, that the stage settings should carry over to the audience a pervasive mood in order to create the proper emotional background for the play and thus intensify its impact. When Lugné-Poë and Paul Fort wanted to evoke

mysterious overtones in a scene, they would hang a gauze curtain in front of the stage which gave a shadowy character to the props behind it. In his production of *Pelleas et Mélisande* (1893), Lugué-Poë went further than this in a drastic reappraisal of the functions of the *mise en scène*; he not only did away with the footlights, as Antoine had done before him, but he also eliminated all furniture and stage accessories and kept the proscenium in semiobscurity.

It was in this Paris, filled with new ideas, that Jouvet appeared. After enrolling in the school of pharmacy, he got a job in an acting company. He was awkward and green in every respect. He trembled with excitement when he saw the director prepare the contract. In his befuddlement, he recalled the advice of friends and advisors who told him to ask for a larger sum than he expected to receive, since the amount would summarily be reduced. He asked for 150 francs a month. The director, startled by his presumption, asked "How much?" Unsure of himself, and fearing a prompt dismissal, Jouvet replied, "One hundred and twenty." The director, resting his pen on the table, looked up at him and said, "Now let's not joke son . . . I'm the director here. I'll give you ninety francs. Take it or leave it."<sup>13</sup> Young Louis, confused, nodded his assent.<sup>14</sup>

Jouvet, drawn to all phases of life, showed great interest in the constructive activities he observed everywhere—the cabinetmaker at work, the shoemaker, the artist. He responded to each with an instinctive appreciation of sound craftsmanship. However broad and catholic his outlook was during this period, he was by nature inclined to seek out men of similar background and interests, with whom he could exchange ideas, find support for his half-formed convictions, and gain encouragement. Gradually he formed a circle of friends with whom he aired his views, and pronounced judgments on the theatre and poetry.<sup>15</sup> Self-confident, enthusiastic and even rebellious, these ardent young men soon developed an increas-

ing faith in themselves, in their points of view, and in their criticism of contemporary life. They finally attained sufficient courage to communicate their ideas to the public. They launched a magazine, *La Foire aux Chimères*, the first number of which appeared in December 1907. In it they outlined their artistic goals.

Unknown friends, join us.

We are not bringing any prophetic, religious, or social innovations.

We are young men without wealth and without glory.

But a great faith has stirred us all, FAITH IN LIFE. And we summon all those who want to discover life. We have come to rally all uncorrupted youth, to coordinate otherwise ineffectual forces, to centralize dispersed enthusiasms; we are creating a movement of art in action so that more beauty, clarity and tenderness will penetrate all forms of human activity.

Join us.<sup>16</sup>

This group became known as the Groupe d'Action d'Art. In their ambitious program, they organized a literary club, summer excursions, exhibitions of paintings and sculpture and musical recitals.

When he first embarked on his acting career, Jouvet sought to work with small experimental groups. It might be said that he had only one foot in the theatre when he decided to try to pass the entrance requirements for the Conservatoire. In 1908, still ungainly, thin and a stutterer, he performed before a jury in the role of Horace and was rejected.<sup>17</sup> Twice again he tried to pass the examinations, first as Don Juan and then as Arnolphe in *l'Ecole des Femmes*. He was unsuccessful both times. But, convinced of his ability, and characteristically persistent, he asked permission to audit Leloir's classes at the Conservatoire. His request was granted.

Leloir's teachings inspired Jouvet as they had a whole generation of young actors.<sup>18</sup> Unquestionably, Jouvet's keen and fastidious mind was much more active when it came to the study of something he loved. The actor, Leloir, was not only to teach him the subtler aspects of his art, but also to instill some self-confidence in him; a strong base was being es-

tablished on which Jouvet was to build slowly and solidly. Leloir soon realized that Jouvet was a gifted and conscientious student, already artist enough instinctively to absorb what was important to his development. This instinctive capacity to reject what one does not need from a complex set of facts and impressions and take what is necessary for the support and growth of one's talents is generally the mark of the artist.

Jouvet learned from Leloir how to display his native abilities most effectively on the stage. He also learned the importance of a harmonious relation between himself and the other artists in the play. His sense of the dramatic was schooled and sharpened. He made himself into a tool to project to the audience the role he was performing. Leloir's penetrating and effective voice made a lasting impression on Jouvet; the latter soon improved his technique for mastering his voice and using it to best advantage. Finally, it was Leloir who suggested to Jouvet that he choose the role of Arnolphe for his next audition.

These were extremely stimulating days for Louis Jouvet. He gained in scope and experience. On the material side, however, he had made little or no progress. To make ends meet, he had to regulate his life with strict frugality. He made so little money that his trousers, the cheapest he could buy, were sadly frayed, his shirts were of the coarsest cotton; he used celluloid collars because they cleaned so easily, and paid five francs and seventy-five centimes for his shoes.<sup>19</sup> He half starved himself, but on the other hand saved enough money to attend the theatre rather frequently. He went to see Mounet-Sully, for instance, over forty times in *Oedipe-Roi*.

In 1909, together with his friends of the Groupe d'Action d'Art, he took the bold step of founding the Théâtre d'Action d'Art, becoming himself the director of the troupe as well as an actor in it. The Théâtre d'Action d'Art gave performances most frequently under the auspices of the Université Populaire du Faubourg Saint-Antoine, at the Château du Peuple, the Porte de Madrid, the Bois de Boulogne, and the Théâtre de



la Ruche des Arts.<sup>20</sup> These performances gave Jouvet further opportunity to develop a fuller feeling of the stage and a deeper sense of rapport between himself and the other actors. He learned more precisely and forcefully to externalize his role. He realized how much he had profited from Leloir's instructions. However, he was still in a formative period and had not as yet been singled out by the critics for special mention.

The following summer he toured the provinces with the troupe. But this experience failed to be rewarding, though at bottom all experiences, of whatever nature, are eventually nourishing to the artist. But to Jouvet's mind, at the time, it had been a very difficult and disillusioning summer. There was not much to show for it, except time wasted traveling on slow, dirty trains, nights spent in small drafty railroad stations, and plays often performed to unresponsive audiences. Jouvet was very glad to return to Paris.<sup>21</sup>

Upon his return he followed an active program, playing an increasing variety of roles with his group—Oswald in Ibsen's *Ghosts*, Burrhus in Racine's *Britannicus*, and Arnolphe in Molière's *L'Ecole des Femmes*, to mention but a few. This was catholicity indeed for an actor; it was as if he would swallow the world of the theatre in one gulp. Jouvet also resumed his evenings of poetic rendition to round out his training. He gained in vocal facility by his readings of the works of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Guillaume Apollinaire, and Walt Whitman. On the evening of January 28, 1909, the playwright Charles Vildrac heard Jouvet reading Walt Whitman and remarked to his friends that Jouvet revealed a very penetrating insight, a fine grasp of poetic values, and possessed a deep, richly nuanced voice.<sup>22</sup> In April of that year, Charles Dullin began participating in these evenings of poetic readings, and a friendship, invigorating and rewarding to both, soon sprang up between the two.

During the next season, 1909-1910, the Group d'Action d'Art became still more ambitious; it decided to produce several

plays or adaptations of plays by Balzac. The group abided by the rule that there would be no star performers; roles were to be rotated in order to give every actor an opportunity to develop his versatility. The Balzac season opened on November 7, 1909, with *Les Faiseurs*, a five-act comedy in prose. Jovet, as Mercadet, was by no means sensational. Only a few newspapers even mentioned him. A few months later, as Colonel Chabert, the tall and slender Jovet walked on stage stooped, with a few strands of white hair falling on his forehead, his face distorted with the ravages of age and his eyes dim with years of suffering. Few people realized that this old man was actually a very young man, so vivid and so fully realized was his impersonation. But neither of these plays met with any degree of success.<sup>23</sup>

Jovet also played bit parts in many melodramas; he disappeared through trap doors, portrayed the victims of unfortunate circumstances, became lost in a desert or sat on a throne. In short, he experienced a varied and exciting life on the stage. But out of loyalty to his family, he doggedly continued to pursue his studies in pharmacy.<sup>24</sup>

He was privileged to be the pupil of the finest professors of chemistry and pharmacy of his epoch. Professor Béhat, an outstanding chemist and teacher, was the one who failed him in an exam. Jovet, asked to name the most satisfactory antiseptic, thought the professor had requested a classification. The professor repeated his question, and as Jovet stood by silent and embarrassed, he himself answered it, "That which doesn't kill the patient, of course!"<sup>25</sup>

It was during this period that Jovet met Léon Noël, a well-known director and one of the foremost actors in melodramatic and romantic dramas. Jovet, who continued to be an assiduous and impassioned theatregoer, had seen him in the role of Choppart in the *Courrier de Lyon* and was much impressed by his forceful interpretation.

Jovet enrolled in Noël's free course in acting, given every

Sunday morning at the Théâtre Montparnasse. Even though Noël's field was melodrama, he was a seasoned actor and knew every trick of the trade. Jovet derived much benefit from his attendance at the course. Both Gémier and Dullin were also to acquire new knowledge from Noël's instruction—mainly how to heighten critical moments in the drama, the effective use of exits and entrances, the necessity of clear diction and expressive gesticulation, and, above all, understanding what one was about on stage.

Jovet now felt that he had outgrown the Théâtre d'Action d'Art, which, after all, was but another of the little theatres mushrooming all over Paris. It did not offer sufficient scope for his further advance. As an artist, he was perceptive of his own needs for constructive development. He had learned so much from Noël that he either had to push forward for recognition or stagnate with the Groupe d'Action d'Art. His decision was important. Jovet had become very friendly with Noël, since they were drawn together by mutual sympathy and interests, and when Noël offered him an opportunity to tour with him on the continent, he accepted.<sup>26</sup>

In preparation for the tour, Noël rehearsed Jovet thoroughly in the damp cellar of the Café du Globe. As was to be expected, Jovet did not always come up to the mark Noël set for him. Noël's vigorous creative criticism made Jovet more aware than ever of how much there was to learn about the acting profession, if one was to master it. For instance, Jovet failed Noël in some of his lines at a rehearsal. Noël required him to repeat the part until he had assimilated it. As an example of Noël's thoroughness in instruction, it is interesting to observe how closely he studied Jovet at the rehearsals. Jovet, standing in the narrow space which constituted the stage area, between the cast-iron pillars and the blue metal spittoons, performed before Léon Noël, who was seated on a small bench. Jovet was supposed to knock off a hat and say, "Hats off! when you address the daughters of the Marshal,

Duke of Ligny!" He could not succeed, however, in effectively synchronizing his gestures with his speech, no matter how often he tried, and, having exhausted every resource, he awaited the director's comment. Noël, after pondering the matter for several seconds, finally suggested that Jouvét reverse the line, and begin with "when you address the daughters of the Marshal, Duke of Ligny," then pause several seconds, seize the hat, being careful not to knock off the actor's wig, and toss it to the ground. (This was to be done with measured and controlled violence, with finesse, for, if it were crudely done, the effect would fail and it might even appear somewhat buffoonish; furthermore, the hat might roll down to the footlights and start a fire.) Only then was this gesture to be completed, and the rest of the line "Hats off!" to be spoken. When Jouvét finally mastered it, Noël said, "That's it, that's tradition."<sup>27</sup>

Noël's love for the theatre was great. His reverence for the art impelled him to instill a similar attitude in his students. Had Jouvét not met Noël, his talents might well have died on the vine. It was Noël who encouraged both the moral and aesthetic sides of him. This was one of the most rewarding of Jouvét's relationships and when he recalled this period later in life, he mentioned it with a profound nostalgia.

Jouvét, as yet not an outstanding actor, was nonetheless slowly acquiring strength and substance and improving his technique. He began to play bit parts in the Parisian theatres—the Chatelet, the Odéon, and the Théâtre de Belleville. He developed not only a passion for the stage, but also for its component parts—the directing, the *mise en scène*, the study of the text, the quick ingenuity in improvisation. He also began to study theatrical machinery, covering the ground from the very early and little-known Greek period up to modern times. He took courses at the Ecole Nationale des Arts Décoratifs and visited museums. He especially enjoyed the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century masters. It was plain to him now how closely

the arts were interwoven in the theatre, a conception to which he was to return again and again in his reflection. He was slowly becoming a new kind of creature, a man of the theatre, many-sided, scholarly and observant, like the artists of the Renaissance. "The theatre is a world in itself," he was accustomed to say to his friends; "Ah! the theatre! When one has that in one's blood."

Jouvet was somewhat dissatisfied with the rate of progress he was making at this time. Playing bit parts in marginal theatres gained neither recognition nor advancement for him. His sole source of comfort was to be found in the satisfaction he derived from his researches. He decided on July 26, 1910, to ask Jacques Rouché for a job, and he was promptly hired. Rouché was the director of the Théâtre des Arts, a small theatre, situated on the Boulevard des Batignolles, seating six hundred people, but already attracting some attention.<sup>28</sup> Rouché was bent on experimenting with his own theatrical ideas and drew to his aegis many fine young talents.<sup>29</sup> Jouvet was to spend the next two years with this enthusiastic group and to profit by his association with it.

Rouché had been impressed by the rich decorations of Diaghilev's Ballet Russe with its orgy of color and its sensual dance rhythms and music. He outlined his own rather revolutionary ideas on the stage in his book *L'Art Théâtral*. The *mise en scène* for a play, he wrote, "... must neither distort it, nor embellish it excessively, but merely give just value to its main lines and the appropriate character of its beauty."<sup>30</sup> Convinced that stage sets should be highly decorative and not merely *trompe l'oeil* paintings, Rouché engaged the artist Durec to do the décors for his productions.<sup>31</sup> Like the Duke of Sax-Meiningen and Talma before him, he stressed the close harmony that must exist between the costumes, the décor, the direction, and the acting. Instead of clashing with each other, they must all be woven together in a harmonious pattern to make a unified impression.<sup>32</sup>

The atmosphere pervading the Théâtre des Arts was almost monkish in its sense of dedication to its work. The men and women associated with it were indifferent to everything but the theatre, and their capacity for selfless application was complete. They worked in every phase of the theatre. Sometimes they remained in the small dim building until the early morning, working out some acting problem, or studying a text or décor. Some of them, such as Jovet, were too poor to pay the bus fare, so they walked the long distances to their homes. The chief mechanic lived near the Sacré-Coeur, the chief electrician at Pré-Saint Gervais, and Jovet at 32 Rue de la Santé.<sup>33</sup> Jovet received seven francs for each evening performance and only five francs for the matinee. Hence he could barely afford to buy much more than the bare necessities. But he did not complain; spurred on by enthusiasm he was learning and taking on stature.

It was in the Théâtre des Arts that Jovet's philosophy of the stage began to crystallize in one important aspect. By 1911, he was aware of the importance of the text in the theatrical production; it was to become the core of his philosophy. Directors could take different approaches to the text, but for Jovet strict adherence to the text was the only sound principle to follow. He would build on what the text revealed of the characters and their conflicts; he would start with that premise and respect it.

At the end of his brief but enriching stay with the Théâtre des Arts, Jovet reached a point of self-evaluation where he knew that he had attained the creative stage in acting. That is, he now had it in his power to create identities, get inside characters, give them embodiment from within. To build up his portrayals he studied the texts of the plays, went back to them again and again for further gleanings. His creation, for example, of Father Zossima, in *The Brothers Karamazov* was truly unforgettable.<sup>34</sup>

Jacques Copeau, close to Rouché at the time, was also in-

terested in the future of the Théâtre des Arts. He attended a performance in which Jouvét played the carpenter Méteil in Henri Ghéon's five-act tragedy *Le Pain*. He was so impressed by Jouvét's acting that he wrote:

I took particular note of a young actor, Mr. Louis Jouvét, who, in the episodic part of a master carpenter, commands attention by his bearing, his sobriety, and even a certain depth which presages the artist.<sup>35</sup>

Jouvét also participated in four other Rouché productions. He played Le Ministre in *Le Chagrin du Palais de Han*, arranged for the stage from a Chinese poem by Louis Laloy, Le Joueur de Vielle, a silent part in Couperin's ballet *Dominos*, the king in Musset's *Fantasio*, and Le Maître, Le Lion, Le Bourgeois, in *Mil Neuf Cent Douze*, a revue by Charles Muller and Régis Gignoux. He portrayed Le Joueur de Vielle so well that he managed to impress a critical audience with his absolute identification with the character. Good miming is the foundation of sound acting. Jouvét had created a silent language easily understood by the audience, and had proven in this role that he was an excellent mime.<sup>36</sup>

Although he enjoyed his work at the Théâtre des Arts, he wrote Jacques Rouché on May 10, 1912, setting forth his reasons for not returning the following season.

I thank you most kindly for your offer to return to the Theatre next year, but I cannot accept the 200 francs a month as proposed by Mr. Dayle. I had too difficult a time meeting my expenses last year.

Believe me, it was only after careful deliberation that I arrived at this decision because I should have been very happy to have worked with you. Please accept my sincere gratitude and my respectful appreciation for everything you have done for me.<sup>37</sup>

Jouvét was beginning to realize his own worth and his self-confidence was continually growing.

After he left the Théâtre des Arts, Jouvét continued his studies in pharmacy. By the summer of 1912, he had accumulated, despite his poverty, the astonishing sum of 5,000 francs, which he put to good use by spending it on his own experimental theatre. He decided, together with his intimate friend,

Camille Corney, to rent the Théâtre du Château d'Eau, and run it according to his own principles. To pay current expenses and to attract sufficient audiences they decided to reduce the price of the tickets. Jovet, of necessity austere economical in all of his ventures, could not afford new scenery, so he patched up whatever scenery was at hand in the vaults of the theatre. His production of *Le Crime Impossible*, a three-act play in verse, required three different stage acts: one in hell, the second in a hermitage, and the third in a boudoir. He found only traditional sets in the theatre's store rooms—a bedroom, a living room, and so on; thus he was forced to call on his ingenuity. By turning the sets upside down and flashing eerie lights on the proscenium he succeeded in producing a vague and haunting effect for Satan's abode.<sup>38</sup>

The attendance at this performance and at later productions at the Théâtre du Château d'Eau was small. At the end of the summer, Jovet faced a deficit of 2,000 francs. There was no critical acclaim to encourage him, no group of devoted admirers. No matter; he had started on a course which he knew to be right and he would pursue it.

He had meanwhile fallen in love with a Danish girl, Else Collin, a friend of the Copeaus. At the summer's end, the theatre having been closed and the venture dropped, the couple left together for Copenhagen, where they were married on September 26, 1912. Several months later, on April 12, 1913, he was again back in Paris where he received his degree in pharmacy. He was then twenty-five years of age. Although Jovet had no intention of using his training in pharmacy, it was to serve him well in an odd way; it revealed to him that he could pursue to a successful conclusion a course disagreeable to himself and alien to his inclinations.

In the few years of his apprenticeship, Jovet had laid the foundations of his craftsmanship as an actor in France's renaissance theatre. Moreover, he had been in a position to study



human behavior from many vantage points—in pharmacies, on the streets of Paris, and in the various theatres. All this developed maturity in his outlook.

Now, back in Paris, he visited Copeau several times at his home in Le Limon. Copeau, already impressed by Jouvét's talents as an actor, was soon to engage him in several capacities for his Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier which was still to come into being.<sup>39</sup> Copeau and Jouvét were to ride a rising tide of art and aesthetic rejuvenation in the theatre. At first, Copeau was to assume leadership. Jouvét, docile and dependent, was his disciple. The two men had in common a strong dislike for the contemporary commercial theatre. Copeau wanted to reconstruct theatrical art from the base up; his was an expression of pure fanaticism in the world of the theatre. Copeau wrote:

Unrestrained commercialism degrades our French stage more cynically each day and turns the cultivated public away from it. Most theatres are monopolized by a handful of entertainers in the pay of shameless tradesmen. There seems to be the same spirit of playacting, speculation, and baseness everywhere. And even where great traditions should command a certain sense of decency, there still is bluffing, every type of over-bidding, and all sorts of exhibitionism, living off an art, of which there is no longer any question that it is dying. Inertia, disorder, lack of discipline, ignorance and stupidity, disdain for the creator, hatred for beauty seem to be everywhere. The productions have become more and more insane and vain; critics have become more easily satisfied, and the public taste more and more misled. It is all this which arouses and revolts us.<sup>40</sup>

The conflicts raging about the theatre at this time reflected, to a great degree, the deep changes that were soon to come about in our western civilization. All over Europe leaders of the theatre were elaborating new and interesting theories of production, acting, and scenic design.

## *Jouvet and the Vieux-Colombier*

### *1913-1922*

*As for me, I am indebted to him for the most precious, the most exciting, the most fruitful friendship of my youth.*

*Like a few men of my generation, I can say that I owe him everything that I am.<sup>1</sup>*

It was the spring of 1913 when Copeau announced he would try out actors for his projected theatre on the Rue du Vieux-Colombier. The news spread rapidly through the grapevine of Paris. The many hopefuls awaiting such an opportunity soon foregathered at the old Athénée Saint-Germain theatre on the Rue du Vieux-Colombier for the critical test. Among the candidates was Louis Jouvet. After the audition, Copeau promptly engaged Jouvet, whose highly developed talents he had already recognized, in the capacities of scene painter, mechanic, manipulator of lights, decorator, and, last but not least, actor.<sup>2</sup>

The old theatre which Copeau had rented and which he intended to refashion was situated on the Left Bank on a street largely populated by artists, writers, poets, and students. The street had a fine but shadowy association with the theatre of the seventeenth century. It was here, supposedly, that

Molière, Racine, and La Fontaine used to call on Boileau. Thus, the Rue du Vieux-Colombier was of some historic importance, and despite Copeau's wrathful iconoclasm, it appealed to him.<sup>3</sup> The theatre would, of course, be remodeled to accord with Copeau's conceptions, and eventually be unrecognizable as the old Athénée Saint-Germain. Remodeling was just one of the problems which Copeau faced. To attract audiences to a theatre in the backwash of Paris, he undercut the price of tickets at the boulevard theatres; moreover, he instituted a system of season subscriptions, attractive to those with artistic ideals and little money. By these maneuvers, he made his theatre the least expensive to attend in all of Paris.<sup>4</sup>

Copeau was a man of great force and intelligence. Both traits revealed themselves plainly in the direct grip he took on any project. He had long been occupied with thoughts of the theatre and had formulated a system of ideas which, by virtue of his very dynamic nature, he sought to impose on his co-workers. He had contributed numerous criticisms and articles on the theatre to the *Gaulois*, *Le Petit Journal*, and *La Grande Revue*. In 1909, together with André Gide, Jean Schlumberger, André Ruyters, and Henri Ghéon, he had founded the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. In its pages Copeau attacked with savage directness the debased state of the contemporary French theatre. He was determined to change the trend, to rebuild the theatre from the bottom up. When he founded his Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in 1913, he stated his impelling reasons for doing so: ". . . the feeling which stirs us, the passion which drives us, compels us, forces us, and to which we must finally yield, that is indignation."<sup>5</sup>

Copeau's new theatre was to be designed along simple classic lines. He would have none of the fustian of the boulevard theatre, the heavy ornamentation, the gold plate, the rococo cut-glass chandeliers. He would let in clean air where there had been an accumulation of dust, stuffy ideas, dimness and an intolerable stagnation. In short, he would cleanse the com-

mercialized theatre of all that was hideous, cheap, and frustrating.

His theatre would be as simple in conception and as harmonious as a Doric temple—at once functional, orderly, and beautiful. Copeau would embody in its construction all that he had assimilated and felt he could use of the ideas of Gordon Craig, Adolphe Appia, Constantin Stanislavski, Harley Granville-Barker, and Vsevolod Meyerhold. Light yellow wall panels, green curtains draping back to the sides of the stage, and indirect lighting, soothing to the eyes, would provide the interior decoration for his new theatre.<sup>6</sup> The stage would be bare to permit direct contact between the audience and the actor.<sup>7</sup>

No detail was missed. This was going to be a new kind of theatre for Paris—functional without being mechanical, revolutionary without being sentimental. It would provide a more appropriate background for plays both old and new, old plays seen in fresh perspective, and new plays interpreted in the light of the times. The functional element would comprehend a new conception of the theatre, as something more than theatre, with broader cultural outlook and social implications. It would be a unit, housing beside the theatre itself all of the administrative offices, including a publicity service, and a storeroom for plays and manuscripts. The latter in itself was an innovation at time when manuscripts, unless specially solicited, were carelessly handled; here, at least, they could be found without difficulty when desired and would have the benefit of a tomb. In the lobby, standing on a pedestal, was placed a bust of Molière, a symbol of dedication to an idea.

Copeau's nimble and perceptive mind had already laid down the course that the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier was to take; he would seek fresh techniques for achieving more powerful and suggestive visual and dramatic effects while strictly adhering to the import of the text. He would also try to make

finished and versatile actors out of unleavened human talent. The potentialities of those who auditioned before Copeau were generally discernable to him, though they had often been overlooked by the blasé professional judges of the commercial theatres. What he planned to do in his theatre was going to be as marked a departure from the commercial theatre's way of functioning as was the departure of the impressionists from the stale formalistic painting that had preceeded the great innovators.

Copeau hired ten actors<sup>8</sup> after the audition. These were to constitute the core of his new efforts and were to develop under his tutelage, working together harmoniously for long hours, for days, for years. They were to help establish France's foremost modern theatrical venture before the First World War.

One of the names on the roster, that of Charles Dullin, is already familiar. He and Jouvet had already worked together; they had similar ambitions and the same dedication. By now, both Jouvet, in spite of his disappointments, hardships and handicaps, and Dullin had been fairly well trained. But, in Copeau's opinion, none was sufficiently well trained for his disciplined purpose. Copeau had very pointed ideas about what constituted an actor's physical and emotional equipment. Following the principles of Molière and the Elizabethans, he would try to develop the actor's every potential, to make him a thoroughly versatile individual, as skilled in physical exercises as with voice, body, and mask.

While the Théâtre de l'Athénée Saint-Germain was being renovated in June of 1913, Copeau took his troupe of ten actors to Le Limon in the region of La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, about an hour away from Paris by train. On arrival in the lovely green countryside, his actors were boarded at the homes of nearby farmers. They were settled in relative comfort, unhampered by economic worries and in a position to devote themselves unremittingly to study and hard work. Copeau's

group would rehearse out-of-doors every day, sometimes for five hours without interruption. For stage settings, he would turn nature to good use—a group of trees, a bush, a field. He made every demand on his actors, striving to create vigorous and graceful bodies, as physically adept as those of the Elizabethan actors, able to fight, to run and perform any arduous leap that a play might require. They swam, fenced, danced; their bodies became suppler, stronger; they were flushed with good health. This working schedule was carried on in complete isolation for ten weeks. On September 1, 1913, the troupe, pronounced fit, prepared to return to Paris. The actors were masters of their bodies, of their voices, and of the various dramatic techniques which Copeau had taught them.<sup>9</sup>

The night of October 22, 1913 was to be memorable in the lives of the actors. The Vieux-Colombier was inaugurating its first production. Two plays had been selected, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, in five acts, adapted by Jacques Copeau from the original of the Elizabethan Thomas Heywood, and Molière's *L'Amour Médecin*.

The house was filled to capacity and, of course, the actors were tense with expectation and excitement. The first night might decide the matter of the troupe's survival. When the green drapes were finally drawn back, the stage revealed a severely simple *mise en scène*, consisting of a table, two high-backed chairs, and a sun-gold background.

The Heywood play is, understandably, old in style and rather heavy in pace. Copeau had attempted to modernize it by omitting all unessential parts, giving it a clearer and more forceful dramatic line. But he still followed the general plan. It related the consequences of Mistress Frankford's (Blanche Albane) infidelity with her husband's best friend Wendoll (Jacques Copeau). Master Frankford (Roger Karl) seemed inclined to be lenient when he discovered his wife in a compromising situation with his friend, but he actually turned out to be a despot, dealing out the sort of kindness that kills.

Heywood, like Shakespeare, was both an actor and an author and he indulged in plots and counterplots. By cutting all Elizabethan excess, Copeau tightened up the dramatic situations, but apparently not sufficiently.

Louis Jovet played a small part, that of Master Cranwell; he appeared with Wendoll on the stage at the point when Frankford begins to suspect his wife's infidelity. He was dressed in the Elizabethan style, with tight knee boots, a dark loose jacket, a white collar; he wore a short and smartly trimmed beard, a mustache, and long hair which hung down from his forehead in the form of a bang. This role was so inconspicuous that the critics overlooked him in the reviews. But Roger Martin du Gard, impressed by Jovet's first appearance on the stage of the Vieux-Colombier, wrote years later that the nobility of his stance, the authenticity of his gestures, the intensity of his emotion and studied immobility when called for, all combined to make his silhouette unforgettable.<sup>10</sup>

Jovet first distinguished himself with this troupe, oddly enough, as a master of lighting effects. He received several commendations for his achievements on this score. His subtle manipulation of lights to create a fitting atmosphere for the scenery was something new; restraint in stage setting was still novel at that time when the stage was generally overstuffed with props to create the impression of verisimilitude.

The simple stage sets created by Francis Jourdain for this production gave full scope to the audience's imaginative participation. The only props in the scene in which Master Frankford and his servant surprise his wife in a compromising situation were an iron fence and dark blue drapes. In the scene in which Mistress Frankford plays on a lute, there was only a plain backdrop with a grayish-gold luminous horizon above it. The costumes designed by Valentine Rau belonged to the period; Copeau, as did previously the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, believed in historical accuracy in his *mise en scène*.

In *L'Amour Médecin*, Jovet had a fairly prominent part, although only a handful of people were discerning enough to see that he possessed rare qualities as an actor. Jovet himself was doubtful that he could be effective in this part. Standing in awe of Molière and realizing how gifted an actor must be to breathe life into his characters, he had hesitated to accept any of Molière's comic roles. But he had finally acquiesced at Copeau's insistence and the latter's faith in Jovet was rewarded by a brilliant performance, which astonished most of all Jovet himself.<sup>11</sup>

In this comedy, the author characteristically ridicules doctors, for their ignorance, their quackish ideas, and their pompous pretensions. Jovet, as Macroton, was an overbearing and bombastic fellow. Suggestive make-up was necessary to perfect this characterization, and Jovet was as much a student of this art as he was of lighting. Macroton, a skeletal figure, was draped in a black robe. Large spectacles hung perilously from the tip of his nose. His prominent cheekbones were smudged with grease, his face seamed with wrinkles. However, Jovet still felt unsure of himself and just before he made his appearance on stage, he once more tested his facial reflexes before a mirror. He sought, at the last moment, ways in which he could improve his gestures. As a result of his patient and intelligent preparation, he was hilariously effective, his acting bringing out the character in bold relief. He knew he always had to project his characterization, as a believable human being, on to the audience. And in this role of Macroton, Jovet succeeded with *éclat*. But few in the audience suspected, in view of his nonchalance on the stage, that before appearing, Jovet had been wavering and lacking in self-confidence, haunted as always by the possibility of failure.<sup>12</sup>

After the performance, the cast was cheered. André Suarès wrote that Molière had never been so well served and "I am crazy about your two doctors, the fat one . . . and the other one, that tall stammering skeleton. I almost died laughing."<sup>13</sup> And



the critic Henri Ghéon, writing for the *Nouvelle Revue Française* also expressed his delight.<sup>14</sup>

Excited and stimulated by their success, the actors remained in the theatre long after the audience had left, talking themselves out till the early morning, discussing future plans and conjuring up broad vistas of brilliant achievement. Jovet, however, was not of a nature to be as easily carried away as the others. Being more reflective and introspective, he stood apart to consider the situation in the light of his understanding.<sup>15</sup> He was very critical of himself; he saw so much that could be improved in his portrayal. He took the necessary unremitting hard work for granted.

Jovet's powers of self-criticism were to stand him in good stead. His dissatisfaction with his characterization forced him to experiment and to improve on the old. It was not unusual for Jovet, dark and intense, with his strangely shaped head and the incisive planes of his face, to be found lingering on the bare silent stage pondering, while slowly defining his objectives. He often called upon the resources of his mind to give direction to his emotions, going beyond being merely an interpreter because he sought solid principle as the basis of his art. He enjoyed the sense of isolation which those moments gave him. He seemed indefatigable.<sup>16</sup>

The troupe, by now superbly organized, spent the following days and weeks in hard work. It not only rehearsed many long hours, but made its own costumes and scenery. It functioned as a unit, all the members submitting to the same discipline and devoting themselves to the same ends. Copeau was the inspiring leader, but Jovet was assuming more and more responsibilities, for Copeau, who had suspected his worth since he had seen him in *Le Pain* at the Théâtre des Arts, considered him to be one of his most astute advisers in theatrical matters.

During the long rehearsals and many hours spent designing new decors, a peculiar quirk appeared in Jovet's character;

or rather, the exaggeration of a tendency always latent—a tendency to be somewhat harsh in judgment toward lesser men. He would respect and give himself only to those who worked as hard and as faithfully as he did. He did not feign his dislike for the bluffers, the lazy, the noisy, and the chatterers, and for this reason, many thought him disagreeable. This attitude was really due to an almost fanatical integrity. Since integrity to life and to art was at the base of his character, he had always been harsher and made more demands on himself than he did of others, but, at the same time, he did not become overly friendly with those whom he thought invited his disapprobation.

Copeau had never accepted “the middle of the road” attitude so characteristic of the boulevard theatrical directors; he was willing to undertake the production of plays by unknown but interesting literary talents. Such a one was Jean Schlumberger, whose *Les Fils Louverné* was Copeau’s second production, and was presented on November 11, 1913.

Schlumberger was a keen analyst of character and expressed himself with simplicity and point. Two brothers are the principals of *Les Fils Louverné*; one Didier (Roger Karl) cruel and egotistical, the other Alain (Charles Dullin), marked with the same defects, but who, with a growing awareness of himself, finally manages to overcome them. This somersault in character was made brilliantly plausible by the author’s skill and understanding, and actually it is not foreign to human nature.<sup>17</sup>

In this play Louis Jovet acted a minor part, one of the old farmers, Grimbosq, who appears only in the first scene. Grimbosq, who has worked faithfully on Didier’s father’s estate throughout his adult life, is summarily dismissed by Didier when the latter, on inheriting the property, finds the finances in bad condition. In the struggle that ensues between him and Didier, Grimbosq dies of sheer aggravation.

In this role, Jovet, now twenty-six, had to make up as an

aged and wearied farmer. When he appeared, bent and wrinkled with age, clad in the roughly woven clothes of the poor French peasantry, he realized his role with ease, authenticity, and grace. For beyond the make-believe, Jovet knew that the actor must reveal an essentially aesthetic structure, or, one may say, a unity of all the parts of the body. It is this aesthetic quality which gives keen satisfaction to the sensitive members of the audience who fully participate in the actor's art. Jovet knew full well that not all in the audience came solely to be thrilled, although that also was a fundamental part of their pleasure. Jovet had reached a higher level of acting in this role; and never, from then on, would one apply to him Garrick's criticism that French actors were lacking in grace and naturalness.

The other members of the cast also achieved great distinction. The play, however, was not successful. Although superbly done with tensions nicely sustained and balanced throughout, it failed in effect.

A week later Jovet played Ulasdislas, a young soldier of fortune, in a three-act comedy, *Barberine*, by Alfred de Musset. It conjured up the Hungary of the Middle Ages, when King Mathius Corvin was at war with the Turks. When produced in 1882 *Barberine* had a characteristic excess of décor. Copeau, whose aim was integrity, reduced the *mise en scène* to the simplest—a chair, a table, and a cushion on the proscenium. The actor therefore had far more freedom to express himself, but the burden of projecting his character was without the support of a multiplicity of props, which might serve to conceal his inadequacies. It required a very subtle art to make this poetic fairy tale effective.

Jovet, in the role of Ulasdislas, appeared only in the first part of the play. Tall and stately, he portrayed the man of the world whose seductive powers had already been the talk of the town. The play enchanted the audiences and was repeated fifty-two times.<sup>18</sup>

Jouvet had portrayed a wide range of roles by this time, from the tragic to the comic and farcical, all of which had served excellently for his development. However, he was so diffident, despite his success, that he still thought whatever gifts he possessed were of a limited sort. Copeau, on the other hand, had a better understanding of Jouvet's abilities and often would yield to his suggestions. He also gave Jouvet greater liberty of action which eventually was to arouse jealousies among the other members of the troupe. Copeau was the first, perhaps, to realize that Jouvet had the potentialities of becoming a great specialist in Molière's roles, roles for which Jouvet had thought himself entirely inadequate.

As the lighting director Jouvet varied his techniques to such an extent that in a single play they might run the gamut of the most pastel-like delicacy to the most brilliant and dazzling; or, as a piece of pure bravura, they might radiate from all sides of the stage, in all colors, cross, crisscross, and finally merge to produce a wonderfully soothing and harmonious atmosphere. His dawns and sunsets, moon-risings or settings, his hot mellow summer suns—all these were the products of Jouvet's fertile imagination and inventive resourcefulness. Once when called upon to project the atmosphere of Spain in daylight, he turned on all the lights to the full and flooded the stage till it was as warm and rich as amber. Jouvet, always fascinated by the idiom of light, even designed special lamps, which were called *les Jouvets*.<sup>19</sup>

Since Copeau, like Appia and Antoine before him, had done away with the footlights, considering them to be too harsh in their effects, Jouvet was given free reign to indulge in creating all sorts of effects with color by clever manipulation of the electrical equipment. For instance, in the scene of Master Frankford's nocturnal return in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, the lights were blocked by solid objects, producing shadows on the proscenium with a mysterious sculpturesque effect which aroused a sense of awe and dramatic involvement

on the part of the spectators. In *L'Amour Médecin*, he filled the stage, as the impressionists did their canvases, with splashes of bright light, creating a sense of unreserved delight, a clear utterance of joy and laughter.

Copeau, intent on setting new dimensions for the French theatre, was to give Paris the best in classical plays. He presented them with the contemporary point of view in mind. Though he was always keen for historical accuracy, he was contemporaneous in psychology; and he believed that the plays which had proved their worth in the past had also something to say to the present. With these principles in mind he produced *L'Avare* on November 18, 1913. Charles Dullin distinguished himself as Harpagon and Jouvet passed unnoticed by the critics; he appeared in only one scene, in the insignificant role of Maître Simon. But he was applauded for the sets he had designed and helped construct. *La Farce du Save-tier Enragé*, a fifteenth-century anonymous play, was produced on December 22, and may be passed over since it was the least successful of all the plays in which Jouvet had a part.

Jouvet's career until now, as far as the critics were concerned, had been a patchwork—some warm commendations from the astute, like André Suarès; on rare occasions, high praise; but mostly indifference, the critics in general ticketing him as a performer of small roles, occasionally showing flashes of talent. Whatever fame he had achieved was due to his skill with lights, and to some degree, to his stagecraft. What hopes he had of rising out of mediocrity would be hard to surmise. He was both reticent and honest, never seeking ascendancy by dubious or sensational methods; and it would be a good guess that this introspective man had thoughts on the gloomier side of the future.

But suddenly, almost overnight, the whole prospect changed with the production of *La Jalousie du Barbouillé*, a one-act play by Molière. In this slight play, produced on January 1, 1914, he made his mark as an actor and received his first re-

sounding acclaim. Moreover, the playwright from whom he had at first instinctively shied as being too formidable for his slender talents proved to suit him best and offered the means by which he came into prominence.

*La Jalousie du Barbouillé* was exactly the right vehicle for Jovet; and with the material given, he created one of the most outstanding characters in his repertoire. He revived it many times in later years when he was the director of his own theatre. In six brief sketches Jovet portrayed *Le Docteur* as the perfect pedant, often in pure grotesque and sometimes standard comic effects, while making blunt dramatic use of the coarse language and stinging insults that punctuate the course of the play. The doctor's height was exaggerated and he was in turn talkative, clownish, pompous, stiff, and self-righteous. However, Jovet's acting was natural and convincing, despite the distortions, paradoxical though it may seem. The audience responded in a way most rewarding to an actor, by not only relishing the characterization with pure fun and delight, but also by acknowledging its familiarity and unwittingly participating in the action on stage.<sup>20</sup>

The secret of Jovet's success with the audience, in arousing such extraordinary response and recognition, lay in his doing what Copeau had suggested. He brought the role close to the hearts of the people, not merely by overstepping the confines of the stage, but by letting the exuberance of his humanity flow over into the audience. By so taking the spectators into his confidence, Jovet gave them a sense of participation. This was not unduly difficult to accomplish, though it was a bold act on the part of the initiator since the character is not only traditionally familiar to the French, but is also a part of the complex human core. The pedant is universal. Though Jovet resorted to caricature and the grotesque at times, he infused it with the breath of humanity. The narrow bridge between solemn sincerity and absurdity affords the firmest basis for true comedy since it enlists one's sympathy. Absurdities being

present in all men, they give one the opportunity to laugh at one's fellows.

In one way or another all people are pedants; in their pretentious knowledge of people, books, art and politics, in their overevaluation of opinions, generally borrowed, and in their vanity in trumpeting them. The closer Jovet approached human weaknesses in his role, the more convincing and forceful he became, and the more explosively funny. He gave people an opportunity to laugh at themselves, without unduly damaging their *amour propre* since they were all born of the same Adam.

Now it might be thought that with this outstanding success, Jovet was "made." Had this happened in America, offers would have been telephoned at once from Hollywood. In this little theatre, Jovet had no such total "success," but his talents were now recognized and taken into account. Moreover, this little theatre did not want "made" men who because of their success would tend to repeat themselves, and thus become automatons. Copeau was too much an artist and too astute a student of human nature to permit vainglory, followed by stagnation. And Jovet unquestionably rejoiced in the rotation of roles since it kept his vanity within bounds and his talent vigorous by constantly fresh challenges.

In the next production, Jovet had a diametrically opposite role which he had to study and explore from a different angle. He had to get inside the heart of it and project the character as an understandable and living human being. The play, *The Brothers Karamazov*, was an adaptation by Copeau and Croué.

This adaptation of *The Brothers Karamazov* had first been performed in France on April 6, 1911, at the Théâtre des Arts, with Jovet portraying the part of Father Zossima and Charles Dullin that of Smerdiakov.<sup>21</sup>

In this new production on February 10, 1914, Jovet portrayed the father, Feodor Pavlovitch Karamazov. He put so much zest into his characterisation, had such a fine grasp and

understanding of it, that he seemed to live the old debauched and decrepit sinner.

His make-up consisted of a long white beard, a mustache, and a wig. He wore a smoking jacket. In one scene, when the father is disputing with his sons, Jouvét, as the father, leans forward in his mahogany chair and looks blearily across the table at his two sons, his hands clutching the chair's arms, his face wearing an expression of cynical amorality. It was utterly convincing, and the critic, Matei Roussou, singled Jouvét out for praise when he wrote:

One actor stands out from the troupe—Jouvét. He's a terrific cynic, a guzzler, a drunkard, as it suits him to be, and in spite of this, one perceives, now and then, a mystical flash in him, like a bit of blue sky amid the gray of the clouds.<sup>22</sup>

On March 23, 1914, the Vieux-Colombier started on its first foreign tour. A reshuffled troupe of fourteen people, eight men and six women, boarded the night train at the Gard du Nord. Such an endeavor was naturally attended by much excitement, though the tour was to last only a few days. However, its brevity did not serve to lessen the troupe's nervous tension. The prospect awakened speculation about possible failure among certain of the actors, and particularly Jouvét. What would their reception be in a foreign land? Would the language barrier have a discouraging effect in England? What would the English think of their spare stage sets, their simplicity, and their radical approach to productions, both modern and classic?<sup>23</sup>

The next evening Copeau's troupe presented *Barberine*, *Le Pain de Ménage*, and *La Jalousie du Barbouillé* at the Repertory Theatre directed by John Drinkwater in London. Drinkwater was a young poet and a member of the British Poetry and Drama Group.<sup>24</sup> Wednesday morning the troupe left for Liverpool and twice produced the same program at the David Lewis Club Theatre. On Thursday afternoon, they arrived at Manchester and gave the same plays at the Midland Theatre.



That very night the actors left for London, arriving at six o'clock in the morning. They were enthusiastically welcomed in His Majesty's Theatre by its director, Beerbohm-Tree. At the first performance the French Ambassador had a private box and the elite of French and English society attended. The same plays were given. On Saturday of that same week the troupe left London and arrived in Paris early enough to give *The Brothers Karamazov* in their own theatre. Of the three plays given in England, *Barberine* by Musset was the most popular.<sup>25</sup> The English audience readily understood and appreciated the wit and poetry of the adventures of Baron Rosenberg. On the other hand, *La Jalousie du Barbouillé* was found to be coarse and in bad taste.<sup>26</sup> On the whole, however, the English were delighted by the performances; the event was a new and refreshing theatrical experience for them.<sup>27</sup> According to one account, the Vieux-Colombier had done more for the theatrical reputation of the French during that brief trip than a large commercial company would have accomplished with all its famous stars in a year of showing.<sup>28</sup>

When the troupe returned to Paris, it set to work on its new production, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. The play, translated by Thomas Lascaris, was a *mélange* of poetry, wit, sentiment, drama, and farce. The actors succeeded magnificently in recreating the Shakespearian spirit, generous in its use of color, poetry, highflown hyperbole, and magnificent impudence. They enjoyed speaking the famous Elizabethan lines, running the gamut of blitheness, from exquisite delicacy to emphatic bluntness and sometimes tortured rhetoric.

*Twelfth Night* was produced at a critical juncture in the life of the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier. Its fortunes, up to this point had wavered and its finances were insecure: it had never quite firmly established itself. Individual actors, like Jouvet, had had outstanding successes but the troupe as a whole, in comparison to the boulevard theatres, had not achieved any remarkable success. Copeau, fundamentally a practical man,

realized that the future of his theatre was at stake, so much so, that its very life might hang on the success or failure of *Twelfth Night*. He put more energy and planning than ever into this production.

*Twelfth Night* opened on May 22, 1914. There was much confusion at the last moment, some of it vastly amusing; for instance, the sight of Duncan Grant, the English painter, bespattered from head to foot with paint, rushing madly after the actors with brush in hand, adding finishing touches to the already extraordinarily conceived costumes.<sup>29</sup>

Jouvet gave close study to his part and the text. He appeared as Sir Andrew Aguecheek, "the puppet on lead-strings of tragedy,"<sup>30</sup> and he was so amusing in his portrayal that Jacques Copeau said of him:

That one over there, whom we see from behind walking backwards, his hands on the hilt of his sword, his sleeve flowing, his arched-leg in a flame-colored stocking and his head crowned with an azure-colored top hat in which two rose-colored wings have been inserted, that is Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Master Jouvet in person. Jouvet perhaps has never acted a comic role with more savory naïveté, more delicacy or more poetry.<sup>31</sup>

With his rare comic gift, Jouvet embellished the part with strokes of genius. At times, Sir Andrew Aguecheek was a scared puppet, at other moments when he stood proudly erect and dignified, his silhouette delicately defined, he might have been mistaken for a prince. Jouvet's way of interpreting the character, the voice constantly out of breath, the undecided facial expression, the long-legged waddling effect of his walk, seemed to be the essence of puerility and silliness, but it was a great achievement of the creative imagination. He would vary his interpretation when, for instance, his face lit up like a clown's with a certain impish air; then a sadness would pervade it, an illuminating quality of mournful self-knowledge and knowledge of the evil in the world.<sup>32</sup>

Jouvet, the skinny, gawky, absurd Aguecheek, was as ludicrous as his seventeenth-century counterpart, Gaultier-Garguille. When his friend, Sir Toby (R. Bouquet), whose costume

emphasized his girth, bounded forth on the stage, he was the reincarnation of Gros Guillaume. When Fabien (Antoine Cariffa), perhaps the modern Turlupin, joined the two clowns, and when they then pranced, danced and finally fell all over each other, bedlam broke loose in the audience.<sup>33</sup>

Sir Toby: I could marry this wench for this device.

Sir Andrew: So could I too.

Sir T: And ask no other dowry with her but such another jest.

Sir A: Nor I neither.

Fabian: Here comes my noble gull-catcher.

(Re-enter Maria. They prostrate  
themselves before her.)

Sir T: Wilt thou set thy foot o' my neck?

Sir A: Or o' mine either?

Sir T: Shall I play my freedom at tray-trip, and become thy bond slave?

Sir A: I' faith, or I either?

As usual, there was little scenery for the play. Olivia's round room, where most of the action took place, had blue walls, a green semicircular bench, two flowering bushes, and a staircase. When the scene changed to the Duke Orsino's palace, the background consisted of pink drapes. When the action took place out of doors, the color of the drapes changed to indicate the passing from twilight to dawn. The drapes, on which the lights poured their luminous tints, produced a varied and enriching atmosphere. In each scene the lighting was altered, thus projecting a variety of stimulating colors and spotlighting the actors.

After a charming little clown drew the curtains at the finale, all the actors came on stage: Maria on the arm of Toby, the clown on Fabien's shoulders, the Countess with Sebastien, the Duke with Viola; then followed Andrew Aguecheek, Malvolio, the Captain of the Guards, and the ladies in waiting. They all stood together on the proscenium, which glittered with the colors of the rainbow: reds, greens, yellows and blues. The colors, together with the simpler lighting effects, created a strikingly brilliant impression.<sup>34</sup>

*Twelfth Night* was acclaimed by the critics as the Vieux-

Colombier's most outstanding production.<sup>35</sup> It glowed in one's memory with a procession of unforgettable images. Claude Roger-Marx wrote:

The simplification of the stage sets adapted at the Vieux-Colombier, the frequent use of draperies, gives free reign to dreaming. As for the interpretation, it reveals a comprehension of the work, an understanding which governs the studying and distribution of the roles. Let us admire the fact that, having sprung from a literary group, this theatre remains in such direct contact with life.<sup>36</sup>

Thus the Vieux-Colombier's first season ended on a triumphant note.<sup>37</sup>

The year was 1914, and there was the lengthening shadow of what seemed inevitable war. On June 28, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir-presumptive to the throne of Austria-Hungary, and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo. In August, 1914, when war broke out, all the able-bodied men in Copeau's troupe were called upon to serve their country.

Jouvet was sent to the front; Copeau went into the auxiliary forces; Dullin, an infantryman, to Lorraine. Other members of the troupe were scattered over the warring area. Jouvet remained in the army from 1914 to 1917.

But during those years of destruction, sadness, and despair, Jouvet never lost contact with Copeau. Lodged in dirty and wet barracks, often exposed to danger, they managed to correspond frequently. In their letters, they discussed such matters as a new school of acting which Copeau had, for a long time, very much at heart. Copeau was brimming with new ideas even during this repressive and turbulent period. Most of all, he wanted to open a school in which he could mold talented young children of high-school age and make genuine actors of them, actors without the faults and routine accretions of those trained in the commercial theatres. His school would feature a well-rounded and extremely ambitious program—courses in speech, the history of drama, physical education, the architecture and construction of theatres, singing, reading, the well-

known analysis of the text, and the dancing advocated by Hyppolite Clairon.

Such was Copeau's plan. At the base of the structure would stand human beings, disciplined men and women, who, when graduated, would feed his theatre with constantly new and productive talents. In this way the Vieux-Colombier would never become ossified or lack fresh human material or bold minds to throw new light on classical or modern plays.

Jouvet favored Copeau's ideas and believed that the new school could seed and stimulate the progress of the modern theatre. After his demobilization, Copeau visited Gordon Craig, the son of Ellen Terry and an internationally famous scenic designer. Craig had founded a school in Florence in 1913 which was forced to close in 1914. However, he continued to live in Florence, adumbrating plans for a new school to be founded when the war would cease. It was his tenet, and one supported by Copeau and Jouvet, that actors must absorb all that there is to be known about the theatre—carpentry, costume making, lighting, drawing, and so forth. Craig and Copeau talked at great length about trends in the theatre and possibilities for future developments in stage settings. Copeau learned a great deal from Craig, though he did not accept Craig's ground for disposing of the unpredictable human actor in favor of predictable marionettes. Then Copeau went to Geneva to meet Dalcroze, who was then enjoying a great vogue. Dalcroze's philosophy was based on the firm belief that rhythmic dancing should be taught to enable the actor to coordinate his bodily movements with his speech. Copeau consulted Dalcroze on the best methods of organizing rhythmical dancing classes.<sup>38</sup> Most of what he heard was not new to Copeau, but these associations helped to convince him more than ever of the necessity of establishing a school of theatre on the broad basis he had contemplated. Dalcroze introduced him to Adolphe Appia, who stressed the affinities that must exist between music and dialogue. Appia also championed the creation of

a three-dimensional stage. Since the actor is a three-dimensional being, he argued, so should be the background, which reflects, adds and suggests so much of what the actor does. Copeau, who admired and was influenced by this innovator, was further encouraged to go on with his project.<sup>39</sup>

Once back in Paris in November 1915, Copeau coordinated his efforts with those of Suzanne Bing, an outstanding actress in his troupe who had worked on the school project during his absence. They were now in a position to open the school within the month, starting with a dozen pupils, boys and girls, under the age of twenty. The initial training began with the students imitating animal sounds, assuming the shapes of trees, benches, and other inanimate objects in order to make their bodies supple and adaptable for any theatrical purpose. Varied improvisations, rhythmic attitudes, and the use of masks were part of their training.<sup>40</sup>

The war was still going on and during those black years the French government wanted to send an Ambassador of the Arts to the United States to introduce both French culture and the new theatrical methods to the American people. This, the government hoped, would strengthen the bonds of sympathy between the two nations. On January 20, 1917, the French Ministry of Fine Arts sent Copeau to New York as France's unofficial cultural ambassador of good will. There he delivered six lectures at the Little Theatre. The effect of these lectures was such that Otto Kahn invited Copeau to bring his troupe to the United States. That same year, most of Copeau's cast had been demobilized at his request. Copeau had asked the Ministry of Fine Arts for their release so that they could participate in the cultural project and insure its success. Jouvett and Dullin were among the exceptions.<sup>41</sup>

A short time later, through the intervention of Georges Duhamel, doctor, future novelist, and former prompter at the Vieux-Colombier, Louis Jouvett, on sick leave in Paris, was able to obtain his release.<sup>42</sup> Charles Dullin, however, was re-

fused demobilization and did not join the group in New York until several months later.

When the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier reached New York City in November, 1917, Jouvet, who had preceded it, met it at the pier. His face radiated satisfaction and pride because he had helped to remodel the Garrick Theatre where the troupe would stage its plays.<sup>43</sup>

New York at this period had a large French colony with a number of French musical and theatrical artists in it. The inimitable *diseuse*, Yvette Guilbert, sang her songs and ballads before enthusiastic audiences; Pierre Monteux, the conductor, was in the ascendant. Jacques Thibaud, the violonist, Robert Casadesus, the pianist, and the Capet quartet were visiting the United States. Now a pioneering theatre was to be added to the list.

Awaiting it expectantly and with considerable awe were the indigenous theatrical groups, such as the Toy Theatre of Boston, the Chicago Little Theatre, Winthrop Ames' Little Theatre, and the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. In 1914 Robert Edmond Jones, Lawrence Langner, Lee Simonson, and others had organized the Washington Square Players, which produced one-act plays in the rear of a Greenwich Village store, and in 1919 incorporated itself as the Theatre Guild.

Copeau and his sponsors thought the Vieux-Colombier could make a highly worthwhile artistic contribution to the American theatre. Once again there was to be a great stir of excitement on opening night in New York, November 27, 1917. *L'Impromptu du Vieux-Colombier* by Jacques Copeau and Molière's *Fourberies de Scapin* were to be the introductory plays. The first was patterned on Molière's *Impromptu de Versailles*, and Louis Jouvet played himself, a member of the Vieux-Colombier troupe. In the second play, he played Géronte, the father. The evening was to conclude with the *Couronnement de Molière*, after which Copeau's son, Pascal,

aged nine, was to put a wreath of flowers on Molière's bust.<sup>44</sup>

As was usual in Vieux-Colombier productions, the sets for the *Fourberies de Scapin* were to create the appropriate atmosphere. The stage was merely a gray desert; the only piece of scenery was a small platform-like structure. In 1917, after much thought on the subject, both Copeau and Jouvet had decided to construct an apparatus, which was most unusual in conception—a small platform, consisting of four large squares of wood, abutted by five staircases, with four steps in each; and three cubes, which, when assembled, served as a bench between the two front staircases.<sup>45</sup> Copeau said:

The stage is already action, it gives material form to the action, and when the stage is occupied by the actors. when it is penetrated by action incarnate—then the stage itself disappears.<sup>46</sup>

Like Appia, Copeau never ceased to stress the interdependence of the play, the actors and the stage setting.

The curtains are drawn on a bare stage with the platform-like structure in the center, and, in the rear, a semicircular orange velvet curtain. In act II, the agitated Argante, father of Octave and Zerbinette, appears on the stage gripping his hat with one hand and with the other wiping his face free of perspiration. Louis Jouvet, as G ronte, on the contrary, is calm, takes short steps and holds a parasol over his head. In this production, G ronte did not carry the traditional cane, but a parasol, which constituted an interesting innovation in itself. Copeau and Jouvet thought that the parasol could more fittingly express the crotchets of his character; it also had the realistic function of protecting him from the torrid Neapolitan sun. Here is psychological suggestiveness derived from the use of a single object. In the course of the play Jouvet opens the parasol, closes it, strikes the ground with it, drags it behind him, and eventually uses it as a weapon, all of which is pantomimic and its significance is easily grasped by the audience.<sup>47</sup>

Jouvet as the *vieil os* G ronte, stood in striking contrast to



Scapin, played by Jacques Copeau.<sup>48</sup> Géronte was physically decrepit and a victim of contending emotions—avarice, terror, rage, and humiliation. Jouvet gave all these feelings full scope and made excellent use of his almost vocal parasol, rendering the characterization with admirable breadth and humor. The repeated cry “What the devil was he doing there?” was delivered with mounting force, yet with an infinite variety of comic overtones. Scapin incorporated the spirit of mischief and ridicule in Molière. He was robust and clever, youthful and racy—the opposite of Géronte in every respect. There was continual contrapuntal interplay between these characters, as in the *commedia dell'arte*.<sup>49</sup> The actors sought to interpret the play as Molière himself might have done, with dancing, high spirits and light-footed comedy; none of it was declaimed, as was so often the case at the Conservatoire, none of it was stilted, the words flowed naturally and with consummate artistry.

However, not many American critics appreciated Copeau's innovations. They were conditioned to their own traditional theatre, with its fast pace, its variety in stage sets and flat characterizations. Louis Defoe's criticism in the *New York World* was characteristic of the reaction of American critics. He maintained that the play was merely a strenuous, turbulent farce, and far from being adequate proof of the troupe's merits as artists or innovators.<sup>50</sup> Arthur Hornblow wrote that any actor could do as well as the French troupe if similarly trained in dancing and the like.<sup>51</sup> The grand qualities of the play were lost on the critics. A simple comedy, such as this, is rich in its implications, saucy and gay. The American critics, surfeited as they were by the harsh and glittering obviousness of the American theatre, thought it thin. The pure spirit of comedy, playing upon passions and foibles of simple human beings could not hold them; it seemed not only superficial, but unsophisticated—surprising, coming from the French. Copeau was disheartened, for the play that had delighted

Parisian audiences was considered a cheap piece of buffoonery in America. Fortunately for Copeau, Prosper Merimée's *Le Carrosse du Saint Sacrement* produced on December 5, 1917, met with a "rare triumph."<sup>52</sup> In this short play, Jovet acted the part of the unctuous and slimy Archbishop of Lima. He also designed and constructed the sets and created the lighting effects.

The play takes place in the eighteenth century; the scene, the office of the Viceroy of Lima. Don Adres de Ribera, the Viceroy (Jacques Copeau), is completely infatuated with his mistress, the coquettish Périchole (Valentine Tessier). The play reveals her strength and his weakness. The costumes are colorful. It is interesting to observe that the characters appear on the stage in the order of the intensity of the colors of their costumes; that is, the first person to appear, the Viceroy's secretary, wears brownish-yellow. The Viceroy himself appears next in a golden brocaded costume which seems to glitter under the lights; then La Périchole with her green, pink, and yellow dress and her Spanish mantilla. Later, the archbishop appears in his violet robes, skull cap, and white lace surplice. He stands out in sharp contrast to the other clergymen, all in dusty black robes. A bright lemon-yellow light floods the stage and recreates the atmosphere of Peru. The scenery consisted of four bright green plants, surrounding the desk of the Viceroy. A drape, stained with a medley of bright colors, served as an exit-entrance.

Copeau finally yielded somewhat to the American audiences' tastes and produced forty-five plays during his stay in New York, one every week. This meant new costumes, new sets, new accessories, all created and fashioned by a handful of very busy men and women. Jovet was also electrician, decorator, and stagehand. He worked steadily on all types of jobs and had little time for sightseeing. Consequently, his impressions of New York City were superficial and thus unfavorable.

The troupe continued to give performances, some of which met with a certain amount of success, like the *Carrosse du Saint Sacrement*, and others, like the *Fourberies de Scapin*, which were dismal failures. On Christmas day, 1917, Copeau once again put on *Twelfth Night*, his most outstanding Parisian success, this time for American audiences. Arthur Hornblow called it a "gem of perfection,"<sup>53</sup> in contrast to his derogatory criticism of Copeau's opening night. A month later, on January 23, 1918, *The Brothers Karamazov* was performed and was considered one of the Vieux-Colombier's most successful plays.<sup>54</sup> But the tour was also plagued with a series of devastating failures, among which were Octave Mirbeau's *Les Mauvais Bergers*, Meilhac and Halévy's *La Petite Marquise*, and Courteline's *La Paix chez Soi*.<sup>55</sup> *Les Mauvais Bergers* met with the worst reception of all. The audience deserted the theatre during the course of the play on opening night, February 20, 1917.<sup>56</sup> After this failure, Copeau fell back on a classic play, *L'Avare* by Molière. Much to the troupe's surprise, the audience was greatly impressed by Dullin's portrayal of Harpagon, and the evening was considered by the unpredictable critics to be one of the outstanding performances of the Vieux-Colombier season in New York.

There were a few discerning critics who appreciated Copeau's efforts. Herbert J. Seligmann of the *Globe and Commercial Advertiser* wrote:

If there were American producers who could present plays with half the intelligence and imaginative economy with which *L'Amour Médecin* was given last night the word "classic" would lose its terrors and we should see crowds flocking to performances of Shakespeare and Marlowe.<sup>57</sup>

But on the whole, the French theatre in New York had a limited appeal. In the first place, there was the language barrier. Moreover, the appeal was mainly to students or those interested in one way or another in French life and culture. Some called Copeau a snob because the tickets were priced too high and the appeal seemed to be to the elite. But as the

season progressed and as the troupe introduced new plays, it acquired many friends and most of the old ones remained faithful. However, the critics as a body were still writing condescending and unfavorable notices. With the exception of *Le Carrosse du Saint Sacrement*, *Twelfth Night*, *L'Avare*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*, accounting for a quarter of the total performances, the productions failed to make any strong impression.<sup>58</sup>

Copeau repaid the slights with critical disdain for the American public. But when he realized how many friends he had made in America and the extent to which he had influenced the American theatre, he made a more just appraisal. However, in his second season in New York, he included plays with more popular appeal for Americans, though he considered them of little value. He also used traditional stage sets in these plays.<sup>59</sup>

During the summer months, his troupe rehearsed at Morristown, New Jersey, on the estate of Otto Kahn. There, as at Le Limon, they performed out-of-doors. In four months they prepared twenty-eight plays, of which twenty-three had never before been performed by them.

Copeau opened the new season of 1918 with Bernstein's *Le Secret*, a play which David Belasco had produced with great success on Broadway three years previously. The production of this play was one of Copeau's concessions to American taste; he never would have done this type of thing in France. He produced the facile plays of Erckmann-Chatrion, Augier and Sandeau, Brieux, Hervieu, Rostand, Capus, Donnay, and Dumas *fils*, for they were plays he was certain would draw a crowd. His assumptions were correct. During this second season, the Old Garrick Theatre was generally filled to capacity, and there was considerable profit made. But this sort of success really pleased nobody in the troupe. They were artists who felt the disgrace of cheap compromise. However, since they were in a foreign country and emissaries of the

French government, they probably could not have done otherwise.

During the second season, only one play a week was produced, instead of three. Jovet himself was very busy designing sets for and acting in the new productions. He acted the part of Brid'Oison in the *Marriage of Figaro* and "sent a chuckle through the audience when he appeared as the lieutenant."<sup>60</sup> In *Blanchette* by Brieux, Charles Dullin as Père Rousset "as well as Louis Jovet as the peace-making Cantonier were, needless to say, again at their best." In *Crainquebille*, a play adapted from the story of Anatole France:

The pathetic and so radically innocent character of Crainquebille found in Jovet a distinctly fine and subtle interpreter. He added, it is true, somewhat more humor to the characterization than Anatole France originally had in mind, but it was not out of place. One feels that such a miserably homeless vagrant as Crainquebille must have a sense of dolorous humor to be at all able to keep his head up.<sup>61</sup>

During this second season in New York, Jovet became Copeau's right-hand man, and one on whose judgment Copeau could depend. It was also at this time that Jovet began to reflect more seriously about the art of acting and, in fact, about all phases of the theatre. As was to be expected, he gave the human being first importance in a play, and considered the plot secondary. The audience will forget plots and details; but it will delight in remembering fine characterizations which reveal some basic manifestation of humanity, like Tartuffe, the universal hypocrite. The impression made by the actor, or rather the force of the characterization itself, will linger and recall the various threads and entanglements in the plot.<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, Louis Jovet categorically stated that an actor will never be able to interpret fully all the facets of the character he is portraying. In Molière's plays, for instance, the characters such as Don Juan, Tartuffe, and Sganarelle, have subtle and complex traits which may elude the actor. Or perhaps an actor may want to project certain of these traits and bring them out in a way that other actors failed to do. The

actor must live a long time with the character to assimilate it thoroughly. He must have a creative imagination in order to give his portrayal the force of reality; so that it may be said of the actor, that while he is portraying the part, he is that very person, so strong and impelling must be the illusion sustained throughout the play.<sup>63</sup> Great dramatic artists are inexhaustible in interpretation and each sees the character according to his own lights and the cultural atmosphere of the time in which he lives.

And yet, Jouvét had not rebelled against Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le Comédien*, nor did he agree with Mlle Clairon's unemotional approach to acting, or disagree with the opinion of the Voltaire-trained Marie-François Dumesnil. Jouvét had studied the niceties of these different systems of acting, but suspended any judgment about them since his own principles were still in the process of crystallization.

Keenly aware as he was of their shortcomings in the light of human experience, Jouvét generally took a highly critical attitude toward both modern and classical playwrights. But Molière was supreme and Jouvét's absolute favorite. However, his was not a timid or even aloof admiration. Jouvét did not worship Molière as a classic. He treated him as a contemporary and an intimate, and Molière had a way of kindling Jouvét and bringing out the best in him as an actor.

Jouvét's silhouette of Sganarelle in *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, produced on November 25, 1918 in New York during the second season, was as striking as the best of Daumier's caricatures. Sganarelle pranced, he mimicked, he was truculent. Jouvét gave vivid form and symmetry to his portrayal. His sensitive artistry impelled him to weave the action into a living design, which in turn made for delightful and colorful visual impressions. With high humor and abounding spirit, he went into a frenzy of self-intoxication when he spoke those well-known pseudo-erudite lines in the consultation scene.

Jouvét saw Sganarelle as a rude woodcutter with a heavy

red beard, even though Martine, Sganarelle's wife, described him as being "a man with a large black beard." In addition to the red beard, he wore a mustache, with a trim unknown in the seventeenth century. But this departure from historical accuracy went unnoticed by American critics.

In Act I, scene 6, Sganarelle is seated on a log, drinking and singing. Géronte's valet and steward approach him; standing on either side of him, they bow obsequiously and respectfully raise their hats. But Sganarelle pays no heed to them. At the finale of the scene, Sganarelle-Jouvet, half drunk, red-faced, and holding a bottle in his hand, falls over backwards, his legs flying straight up so that his face, with its flaming red beard, is framed between his long legs. Here Jouvet yields completely to the spirit of clowning. In his interpretation he ran the gamut of emotions, from light drama to comedy and outright farce; and his characterization was so completely integrated that it was constantly recognizable, human, vital, and vastly entertaining.

The stage setting was the same as that of the *Fourberies de Scapin*. However, the actor's gestures were much broader. The production was patterned after those of antiquity, in which emotions were simplified. The actors wore masks to symbolize their basic passions. And Copeau retained the scene with the two peasants which the Comédie-Française had so often eliminated.

The troupe gave a finished performance, and the fresh and spirited approach to Molière reinforced the sound classical style of the play. Indeed, Jouvet and Copeau understood the real nature of the classical. Within its framework, there is vitality and humanity involved in a plot that spins itself out to a definite conclusion (in Molière's case generally a happy one). Jouvet and Copeau aimed for and successfully achieved all these elements.<sup>64</sup>

On December 2, 1918, the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier performed Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*, in which Jouvet played the part

of Ulric Brendel. A week later it produced Augier and Sandeau's *Le Gendre de M. Poirier* in which he played the Marquis; *Les Caprices de Marianne* followed on the 15th of the same month. John Corbin writing for the *New York Times* noted that:

... the Claudio of Jovet was far more happy in its humoresque oddities than in its moments of sinister truculence. The play unfortunately suffered from having its many scenes acted upon a multiple stage. This occurred everywhere and nowhere. But the fatal mistake was the actress cast for Marianne.<sup>65</sup>

In the *Fardeau de la Liberté*, a one-act play by Tristan Bernard, given on the 16th, Jovet played Chambolin and in Edmond Rostand's *Les Romanesques*, presented on the 23d, he was Straford.

In *La Coupe Enchantée*, a one-act play by La Fontaine and Champmeslé, produced on February 17, 1919, Jovet portrayed Josselin, the pedant. He interpreted his part in a straight-laced and solemn manner. Josselin was the tutor, engaged by a rich nobleman who had been deceived by his wife and who had become a woman-hater. Josselin's duty was to see to it that the nobleman's young son neither saw nor met anyone of the opposite sex. When Jovet appeared, dressed in black, with a broad-brimmed pointed hat which seemed to accentuate the inflexibility of his character, black framed glasses, thin eye brows pointing up his empty stare, and long stringy hair, he was exactly what one imagined seventeenth-century pedants to be. In this role, he made great use of his forearms in a variety of gestures to convey his reactions to the audience. It was often characteristic of Jovet to use one part of his body, an arm or a leg, to express the whole man's feeling. Only a very fine mime can do this effectively; only a sensitive spectator can fully appreciate the extent of this artistic accomplishment, which seems simple since it is based on the technique of the clown. But a clown's techniques, such as those of the Fratellini brothers, are far from being simple; they are drastic simplifications of gestures, emphatically direct, which achieve a simple



powerful and often devastating effect. Jouvét owed as much to the clown as he did to the realistic actor, and by now he was so well trained that he could pass from one to the other with ease. Thus, in its simple stage setting, *La Coupe Enchantée* pulsed with color and fantasy, while remaining always basically true to life, since both poet and clown portray life on a highly imaginative plane.

In the much-discussed *Misanthrope* produced on April 17, 1919, Jouvét portrayed Philinte. It is important to observe that Copeau did not treat the *Misanthrope* as a highly didactic play, as had been customary, but as a comedy. Alceste and Philinte do not descant at length on their philosophies of life. On the contrary, they are quite normal and understandable human beings. Copeau's was a fresh, intimate, and direct conception, which brought the play close to the modern audiences.<sup>66</sup> However, the critic Gabriel Boissy wrote that Jouvét's interpretation of Philinte lent a discordant note to the play.<sup>67</sup>

On April 7, 1919, the Vieux-Colombier gave its final performance in America—a revival of *La Coupe Enchantée*. The actors had achieved some brilliant successes in the course of two years, and suffered a good many failures, but most important, the group had imparted its passion for all phases of the French theatre to many American actors and directors.

Jouvét had personally gained in confidence, though his stay in New York can hardly be said to have been made easy for him. He worked hard, physically as well as mentally, in almost every phase of the theatre. But the total effect of his efforts failed very much to impress the average American audience.

Many people believe that actors carry their acting habits into real life, taking on false airs. The contrary might be said of Jouvét. He brought the naturalness of his everyday life to the stage, and his intonations were devoid of theatricality or misplaced emphasis; in realistic parts, he seemed to be talking to a close friend. Of course, this almost literal or

muted quality disappeared when it was necessary to exaggerate an emotion or do a bit of clowning. Jouvet could make almost all of his interpretations ring true, no matter how complex, because he brought a penetrating insight to his conceptions and knew how to simplify the complex.

Jouvet was a highly emotional man, yet he impressed some people as being cold and unfeeling. There was perhaps a reason for this impression. He had been frustrated in his youth; he had been rejected by the Conservatoire three times; he was a stutterer, and his ambitions had been thwarted by his family. The net result was a guarded manner which suggested more than a hint of coolness to those who did not know him well. Moreover, because of these frustrations, he retained an ingrained dread of failure. Though he had already been much applauded and acclaimed, he was still to some extent unsure of himself and he expressed his deeply personal opinions only to his closest friends. This tendency toward aloofness, his way of shielding himself from the world, inhibited him from being spontaneous, except with those very close to him. Few could be said to have known all of Jouvet, Jouvet *plain*.<sup>68</sup> This relationship with people suited Jouvet. He had always entertained a deep dread of exposing himself to the world. Moreover, his tendency to hide and withdraw from close association, to wrap himself in mystery, was marked in his characterizations in which he would frequently assume mask-like attitudes. In *Twelfth Night*, for instance, he was half hidden under a ludicrous costume, and his face was concealed by masklike make-up. He disliked playing any part which would fully expose his face. As Philinte he wore a wig; as Sganarelle he wore a beard and colored his face to such an extent that it was not recognizable. In *The Brothers Karamazov* his violently distorted face was that of an old, weak, and lecherous sinner. If one were to enumerate the many parts in which Jouvet sought a curious kind of concealment, the list would be long and would suggest the conclusion that he had

a psychological dread of revealing himself, even physically, to the public. For this reason, perhaps, his portrayals achieved a more vivid reality, since by throwing himself completely into the role to lose himself in it, he developed more amply the character portrayed.<sup>69</sup>

It was natural and fitting that Jouvet should take this protective mask from the theatre, for this made possible a marriage between dread and exhibitionism, in which dread was transmuted by a singular self-hypnosis into joy—joy at the moment when he escaped himself and was lost in his characterization; then the two were one.

In 1919, the war was over and the Vieux-Colombier was again in Paris. It was now a mature group of actors which had had the satisfaction of seeing its contribution to the theatre accepted in foreign lands. Despite the misunderstandings and sometimes obtuse criticisms in New York, the body of critics realized, after the termination of its visit, that this French theatre had in some way been wonderful, and had sown the seeds of sound theatrical principles in American soil. Their success, it might be said, came as an aftermath, after due reflection by the critics on what the Vieux-Colombier had accomplished in America. In Paris they were more highly esteemed than ever. They had become a focal point of attraction for many of the finest writers, artists, and actors in Europe, and were to continue to thrive in this friendly atmosphere, with results beneficial to all concerned with the arts.

Once back in Paris, however, Copeau again made changes in his theatre. The stage would of course be bare as usual. This time, however, it would be far forward; in the rear, would be installed a balcony supported by four columns which could be concealed by a drape whenever necessary. The balcony would have three exits. Two towers would stand on either side of the stage, four in all, each with a door, a staircase, and a window. A removable platform would run forward of the stage, on a slightly lower level; this would provide for an

extension of the stage when the action demanded it. The extension would also provide for varied exits and entrances. The stage would be constructed of removable cement blocks.<sup>70</sup>

On February 10, 1920, the troupe once again felt the excitement of an opening night, but how different this opening was from the first in 1913. The actors were now trained to the peak of perfection. The troupe was still intact with one exception; Dullin had broken with Copeau in New York. The actors had an emotional rapport with their audiences, which gave them a fuller sense of appreciation and sympathetic collaboration. So here there existed a rare *esprit de corps*. It would be considered almost indiscreet, on the part of friends of the troupe, to single out one actor for special praise and to put him above the others because it would disturb the atmosphere of equality, dedication, and craftsmanship that prevailed.

They opened the season with Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. Both Copeau and Jouvet loved Shakespeare and read and reread his plays year in and year out. Never since Elizabethan times had the theatre offered scripts comparable to Shakespeare's, which afforded actors infinite possibilities to express passion, poetry, wit, and to move with grace and beauty. Never since then had the actor had such freedom of movement on the stage, while audiences participated in the action with imaginative abandon. The Elizabethans had enlarged the forestage around which the audience sat, and therefore the audience had multiple contact with the players. The Italians, during the Renaissance, did the opposite, pushing the stage back behind a proscenium arch, reducing the playing area, and thus limiting the actor's freedom of movement. Jouvet observed that since a restricted stage area had become the tradition, there had been scant opportunity for the actors to give their plays depth and perspective. The actor could not fully express all that the text might require, and the advantages that depth and perspective could give, richly magnifying the play's effectiveness, were lost. The

result was a hampering of dramatic illusion.<sup>71</sup> In Copeau's theatre, on the contrary, the action whirled all about the spectators, establishing a close contact with them and increasing communication.

For the production of *The Winter's Tale*, sets were made which would permit the action to flare up on one part of the stage, subside, and flare up at another, thus giving the audience a sense of rapid and busy sequence. Part of the stage would be illuminated wherever a scene was being enacted; drapes, behind which the company would be shifting sets for the following scene, covered the rest. The footlights had been done away with; the border of the stage was painted gray; the floor was of cement. All this produced an austere impression, similar to that of early Greek temples.<sup>72</sup> There were only two exits on the stage—a walk-out through the garden and another in the rear. The stage itself was subdivided in the rear, to the right a door, to the left a staircase. The crowds, when called for, stood on the stairs, making for a superb mass effect. For instance, in the scene in which the Queen is judged, the people gathered about on the stairs, producing the effect of a highly solemn assembly. There were few props—a bed, some chairs made of lightly colored cubes, a throne, also made of cubes in a pyramidlike structure, and the staircase.

The costumes designed by Fauconnet, shortly before he died, were sober in line, but beautiful in texture and fresh and lively in color. When the lights shone upon them, they assumed an exquisite fairylike quality, charging the atmosphere with fantasy. A delicate and subtle suffusion of light made the scene of the Queen's vigil at the castle of Leontes extraordinarily effective. In this scene, the Queen's ladies-in-waiting were chatting on the side of the stage under dim lantern lights; on the other side, the Queen was caressing her son. Because of the inspired lighting arrangement, the groups were harmoniously composed and not set apart; they were emotionally related and in fluid contact. The scene recalls the almost

formal complementary poses in medieval sculptures. Lighting, as now used, was not only a force that pictorially enhanced the action and suffused the atmosphere to make just the appropriate dream-background, but it also added a subtle spiritual aura to the action. The production was a masterpiece of stagecraft and direction.

Louis Jouvet played only a small role in *The Winter's Tale*, that of Autolycus, the eccentric clown, the parasite, a useless and gratuitous fellow. The role was not sufficiently telling to give him scope. But he did stand out in the production as a painter in lights; his efforts in this field appeared more striking than ever. He could make a situation more emphatic or intangible or highly suggestive by the use of atmosphere. Like Appia, he felt that the character's emotions could be heightened, contrasted, or set into bolder relief by the manipulation of lights.

In spite of all the love and devotion Copeau and his troupe gave this play, the Parisians remained indifferent. They were not impressed by the bareness of the grey walls, by the cement floor. Henri Ghéon did not care for the production as a whole, but he did highly commend the *mise en scène* and the acting.

Before these ardent and docile young people, surrounded by a few older members whose experience is known to us all, one has the impression of disciplined spontaneity, of joyous rivalry, of a marvelously diverse source of energy which asks only to come to the fore, in brief, of an almost boundless reservoir for the author who might want to work with them.<sup>73</sup>

As the season progressed, however, Copeau produced a number of successful plays such as Vildrac's *Le Paquebot Tenacity*, *Le Carrosse du Saint Sacrement*, and Georges Duhamel's *L'Oeuvre des Athlètes*. Henri Bordeaux thought the last named play one of the most comic ones he had ever seen.<sup>74</sup> But it was presented only twenty-two times; the general public remained aloof in spite of many enthusiastic reviews by the critics.

With *L'Oeuvre des Athlètes*, Duhamel wanted to give an impression of universality, implying that this was the sort of

story that could take place anywhere at any time. The drama revolved around a principal whom Duhamel portrayed as an imbecile. Filiatre-Demeslin-Jouvet pretends to have inventive gifts and he formulates astounding and fantastic systems; he tries to impose these on others by the hocus-pocus of big words and a sonorous tone of voice. Duhamel introduces this pompous man into a normal household, and, as the action proceeds, shows how contagious his silliness is and to what extent it can influence the naïve. Jouvet played this role to perfection. He struck out the character in broad lines, and yet never failed in telling details; his eyes were vague, his gestures indecisive, his mouth clammy. As he strutted around the stage, dressed in an ordinary business suit, he constantly repeated his formulations and tried to impress others with their importance and complexity.

The stage, as usual, was rid of all extraneous details. There were a few chairs, a sideboard, and a pot. The costumes resembled the clothes seen anywhere in a modern city. But they were stylized to produce a sharp contrast between the prosaic and everyday appearance of the principals, and the impressionable and fantastic mentality they revealed.

The next production in which Jouvet appeared is important to him only because it was the first of a series of plays by Jules Romains, in which he was to achieve some of his greatest successes. In the insignificant role of Anselm in *Cromedeyre-le-Vieil*, he attracted little notice except for the flattering reflection that he acted as if he were an etcher. This play was not only an exciting and memorable experience for Romains but also for his friends such as Georges Dumamel, Charles Vildrac, and Georges Chennevière, who had been part of the Abbaye de Créteil venture.

Copeau was enthusiastic about the play and wanted the mass groupings to suggest the truly dramatic qualities inherent in them. As the curtains parted on opening night, May 27, 1920, Copeau declared in his program notes:

The cultured spectator should not expect to be basely humored by the vulgar violence of naturalistic rusticity or by the high jinks of a picturesque squawker. What we wish you to hear is a poem, that is, the sustained song of the human soul when it soars toward divinity, nature, and love.<sup>75</sup>

To conclude the season of 1920, on July 1, Copeau produced three one-act plays: a revival of *La Coupe Enchantée*, Vielé-Griffin's *Phocas le Jardinier*, and Emile Mazaud's *La Folle Journée*. In the last of these plays, Jovet played the principal role, that of Truchard, an old man who has been invited to spend the day in the country with a retired friend, M. Mouton (André Bacqué) whom he has not seen for thirty years. Both have changed so considerably during their separation that neither can understand or sympathize with the other. As the day draws to a close, a deep sense of melancholy overwhelms M. Mouton; he feels that youth has irrevocably passed for both of them.

The action takes place in the sort of suburb that attracts old folks of the lower bourgeoisie because of the modest cost of living. The sets, designed by Jovet, are, as usual, simple and evocative. In M. Mouton's garden, the props are few—some lilacs, some pansies, lettuce plants scattered here and there, several garden chairs, geraniums in a pot. A fisherman's hat hangs from a peg. There is a birdcage without birds, and that is all. The scenery does not change, but the atmosphere surrounding it does, moving with slow inevitability, from a mood of mild happiness to one of somber despair. A harsh light illumines the set at the beginning of the play, gradually softening and diminishing to indicate the day's coming to an end, at the same time implying the end of the days of the two old men. From time to time, a train whistle blows in the distance, emphasizing the swiftness of time roaring past. This reinforces the gloom-ridden atmosphere of the end.

Jovet portrayed Truchard as a sad and ruined man. Timid and uncertain of himself, slowly fingering his old cap with trembling hands, he approaches M. Mouton's home. His face



is almost obliterated by a large white mustache, yellowed by the constant use of tobacco. As he enters the house of his boyhood friend, he is emotionally overcome. The comparatively successful Mouton takes the starch out of him, with the result that he is subservient. When he observes that Mouton is quite self-confident, besides having grown fat with good living, he himself is so painfully aware of his failure and his uselessness that he can hardly bring himself to speak. The only words he can utter are "It's amazing how you've gained weight," speaking them with envious looks. His timid gestures, his long periods of silence, and his fumbling reveal a sad, shop-worn, sensitive, and tender sentimentalist.

With this production, the Vieux-Colombier's 1919-1920 season came to a close. Despite its vicissitudes, Copeau's theatre was a success. It was not a snobbish theatre, as many supposed, though it did attract snobs. It actually was part of the workaday world, trying to bring fine acting and intelligent stagecraft to the theatre; it also tried to promote dramas of exceptional caliber, without regard to commercial success. Above all, Copeau wanted to deal honestly with his playwrights, his actors, and his audience, and in this he succeeded. It even became stylish to spend the evening at the Vieux-Colombier, and many Americans in Paris made it a practice to see at least one production.<sup>76</sup> Yet, in spite of this theatre's well-deserved popularity, its finances were at a very low ebb. There was a reason for this. Upon Copeau's return from New York, he decided to remodel the forestage by projecting it out into the audience, and thereby eliminated some of the orchestra seats. Since the theatre was small to begin with (it had seated 500 people) it could now seat only 300. Although the theatre was most frequently filled, the receipts could not cover expenses. Either the theatre would have to be enlarged or it would lose money on every performance, no matter how successful. On July 17, 1920, Copeau declared a deficit of 116,000 francs.<sup>77</sup>

Reactions to this state of affairs soon set in. Copeau had always depended on gifts and donations in the past, and he had almost always succeeded in obtaining them. Jouvét, however, and many other members of the troupe, were dissatisfied with this insecurity which seemed to be chronic with the Vieux-Colombier, and they wanted to stabilize the situation. But Copeau fought off all arguments for commercializing his theatre; he was afraid that his freedom might be curtailed and jeopardized in some manner. He had learned a bitter lesson in New York.

His main preoccupation at this juncture was the reopening of his school of acting which he had had closed before his New York tour. In the fall of 1920, Copeau finally reopened the school on the same basis as in the past. However, since he lacked space in his theatre to house so large an undertaking, he set it up at 9 Rue du Cherche-Midi. The school was intended to train students from the ages of fourteen to twenty in a broad group of subjects related directly or indirectly to the stage, such as diction, stage setting, make-up, physical education, the history of drama, analysis of plays, poetic and realistic techniques, and so forth. Frequently, writers and others famous in the arts were invited to lecture there.<sup>78</sup> Jules Romains became the director of the school and Mlle Marie-Hélène Copeau (now Marie-Hélène Dasté) its secretary. The school had probably the most brilliant and best-equipped teaching staff in France in that period.<sup>79</sup>

Louis Jouvét was to teach the following course:

Theory of theatrical architecture. Greek theatre. Study of Greek theatre from the standpoint of architecture and material. The rapport between the audience and the orchestra, the orchestra and the stage, the stage and the audience. Questions of acoustics, of visibility, of lighting, of the feasible.<sup>80</sup>

The varied scope of this course indicated how far Jouvét's studies had carried him. But this was not all Jouvét did. He was also technical advisor to those conducting a course in the workshop. This course was very comprehensive:

Studio work. Practical study of stage material. Studio head: Miss Marie-Hélène Copeau. Technical counselors... Geometric drawing. Modeling. Painting. Working in wood, leather, cardboard. Cutting and sewing. This studio work permits the greatest latitude for the initiative and spontaneous taste of the pupil. The pupils will take turns as the opportunity offers, with readings, games, and walks together (Visits to museums, monuments, gardens, etc.).<sup>81</sup>

The Vieux-Colombier ateliers were very simple with an overall artisan-like atmosphere. The smooth functioning of the organization rested squarely on the shoulders of the heads of the workshops, which were strikingly similar to those of medieval guilds. The students were respected, never driven, rarely given to excess, and a spirit of cooperation unified them. Jouvot was the animating force in the group, supervising the work to be done, and manifesting unqualified confidence in those under his supervision. Each student pursued his work with untrammelled spirit under the sympathetic but vigilant wing of the *Patron*.<sup>82</sup>

As for Jouvot's *loge-bureau*, the following description indicates its character: much like an artist's studio, it was divided in two horizontally; the top section was an artist's studio, where Lucien Aguetand spent his time designing sets; the base, used for an office and dressingroom, was reserved for Jouvot. During the intermissions or after a performance, Jouvot would frequently return to his dressingroom, ascend the stairs on the left to the studio, and watch Aguetand at work. Examining the drawing and blueprints very carefully, he would often suggest improvements or toss out the finished or half-finished designs, and make preliminary sketches of new ones as his conceptions altered or broadened.<sup>83</sup>

Although Jouvot did not have precise theories on teaching as yet, he did want to instill in his pupils a respect for manual labor, intellectual curiosity, and moral and intellectual honesty. It was also his dictum that an artist could not develop into a fully rounded comedian with the ability to present the salient facets of a character, unless he were intimate with

every function of the theatre, such as lighting, scenic design, and the rest. In this he agreed with Gordon Craig. The neophyte must, of course, learn how to use his body, his hands, feet, and face, to be able to project the integrated character across to the audience. His muscles must become flexible with constant use, in such tasks as constructing scenery or in some work involving bodily activity connected with the theatre, which demands physical as well as mental effort; and above all, he must have a genuine delight in and love for all he does in the theatre. Without pleasure as a driving force, everything is done in a halfhearted way, and thus falls short of full realization.

Jouvet was now beginning to understand the importance of a close rapport between the *lieu dramatique*, where the action takes place, and the *lieu théâtral*, from which point one follows the action. His two seasons in New York had brought this home to him. The rapport had often been lacking to the eventual detriment of the production. He stressed this rapport in the course which he taught at the Vieux-Colombier. Jouvet also tried to discover new vistas of the theatre. The classes almost always ended with an exchange of ideas between student and teacher, arousing the curiosity of the students to an even higher pitch.<sup>84</sup>

The curriculum lasted approximately three years. The students who successfully passed the examination at the end had to perform with the Vieux-Colombier group for another three years. They were given a modest salary and forbidden to act with any other troupe. After that they could go on their own and branch out as they pleased, or, if very gifted, they might be invited to stay on with the Vieux-Colombier.<sup>85</sup>

In *La Mort de Sparte*, a new three-act play by Jean Schlumberger, Jouvet again played an insignificant role, that of Antigone. Jouvet designed all the stage sets of the play, reverting to the form of the *décor simultané*, which had been popular in the beginning of the seventeenth century. There

were twenty tableaux, many taking place within the same stage setting, and several were presented in front of the curtain. The stage was bare. On the right of it there was a staircase ascending to a large platform. This play was produced only seven times.

After this production, for a period of a little less than a year, Jouvet was to appear only in revivals such as *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, *La Coupe Enchantée*, *La Jalousie du Barbouillé*, *Le Carrosse du Saint Sacrement*, and others. Copeau did not produce a new play until March 7, 1922—*L'Amour, Livre d'Or*, a three-act comedy by Count Alexis Tolstoi, translated by Dumesnil de Gramont. The play is witty, tender, ironic, and at times fantastic. The action takes place in the Russia of the eighteenth century, in the castle of a great lord. The great lord's wife, a princess, is bored to distraction because she is married to an old man. Her godmother, Catherine of Russia, sends her a book entitled *L'Amour, Livre d'Or*. The Princess is thrilled by it; at once she wants to organize a Russian counterpart of the French Trianon. The Prince is not happy about his wife's vagaries and his chagrin turns to fury when he realizes that she has fallen in love with a handsome aide de camp, sent by the Queen to announce her forthcoming visit.

When the audience sees Prince Serpoukhevsky (Jouvet) appearing on stage without a wig, his head wrapped in a scarf, dressed in a lounging robe, under which is a caftan with a belt, with his pants tucked in his boots, it guffaws. Since the Prince is a fool, and never quite normal, the audience reacts to him as it would to an absurdity, with derisive laughter.

The Prince walks into his cabinet, furnished in the best of taste, followed by a clown called Cribble; he approaches a small table. He sees the book lying on it and says: "There it is, that cursed book. It's barely a week since the Empress sent it to us. It's not a big book, but it is devilishly dangerous." The Prince, opening the book with caution, tells Cribble that this is definitely not a book on religion. Whereupon he spits

on the floor in the Arab-taboo manner, that is, in order to deflect the evil eye, *Jettatura*. The Prince now wrestles with his emotions. He wants to beat his wife and yet, at the same time, succumbs to a feeling of tenderness for her. He starts to cry. When his wife enters, he prostrates himself before her, and implores forgiveness for his brutal designs against her. The Princess pardons him. However, when she observes that he does not wear a wig, that his hat is moth eaten, and that he does not know how to bow or to kiss a lady's hand, she comes to the conclusion that his education has been neglected. He must read *L'Amour, Livre d'Or*, principally for the improvement of his manners and possibly for the uplifting of his esprit.

Copeau and Jouvet, in order to make the Prince seem even more ridiculous, furnish him with a small sword, which he does not know how to use. He respects only three things—the Greek Orthodox Church, the Imperial Throne, and the stick (the stick representing a latent strain of primitive brutality in him which frequently overrides his sentimentality). Jouvet was brilliantly effective as the senile Prince. He had studied the role with his characteristic meticulousness and he portrayed it with a fine understanding of the man's degradation, confusion, and foolishness. He knew just how to highlight the brutality, the tenderness, and awkward mawkishness inherent in the character.<sup>86</sup>

The reaction of the critics was highly laudatory, but the play was performed only sixteen times. The critics not only praised the imaginative décor and the *mise en scène* but seemed to enjoy Jouvet's profound grasp of the character, his naturalness of execution and meaningful gestures, which although carefully planned, seemed completely spontaneous.<sup>87</sup>

The last play in which Jouvet acted at the Vieux-Colombier was a drama about one man, *Saul*, by André Gide. He played the relatively unimportant role of the high priest. But the scenery which he created captured the spirit of the Holy Land and the King's august and forbidding domicile. The King's

palace, in which most of the action took place, was a vast room with gray walls and purple drapes. Massive columns to the right and to the left of the stage supported the ceiling. In the center of the stage stood an enormous throne, rising vertically like an arrow. Between the columns, in the distance, terraces, gardens, and tree tops were visible. Four lamps threw troubled shadows around the room. In the scene in which Saul consults the Witch of Endor, dancing lights curled around the gray drapes and partially revealed ectoplasmic shreds of floating material. Another scene (the terrace of the King) was set in a rotunda.<sup>88</sup> *Saul* was produced nine times at the Vieux-Colombier and it was said of Jovet:

The role of the high priest is interpreted by Louis Jovet whose manifold talents adapt themselves so prodigiously and in so varied a manner to each of his creations.<sup>89</sup>

About this time, a discordant note was evident at the Vieux-Colombier. Jacques Copeau and Louis Jovet, intimates for many years, now began to drift apart. They were no longer seen together at Lipp's, a small tavern near Saint-Germain des Prés, where they had often gathered to talk shop.

Many reasons have been proffered as to why Jovet left the Vieux-Colombier. Some said he left, like Dullin before him, as a result of a misunderstanding. Others maintained that he wanted to enter a larger theatrical field, where financial and other opportunities would be more abundant. Still others said that he had quarrelled with Copeau because the latter would not yield to his request that he enlarge the Vieux-Colombier, which, as a nonprofit organization, seated only 363 people. Louis Jovet, many people maintained, wanted to turn it into a more remunerative proposition. All these speculations as to the reason for Jovet's departure from an institution with which he had so long been fruitfully connected may have some elements of truth in them. The true reason is much simpler. It was well known that a member of Copeau's troupe had long been jealous of Jovet's achievements and had tried to hobble

him. He had also tried to belittle Jouvet to Copeau. In these tactics he must have been more or less successful since he had acquired a growing influence over Copeau. Copeau, under such influence, developed an increasing mistrust of Jouvet. And when Jouvet realized how matters stood, he could do no less than withdraw. These unexpected tensions had started long before 1922; they began to appear in New York soon after the war. From then on they became steadily more acute.

Jacques Hébertot, director of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, invited Jouvet to become technical director of his theatre. In October, 1922, after Copeau had promised Jouvet the opportunity to produce the *La Farce de Maître Pathelin* and then changed his mind, Jouvet accepted Hébertot's offer. It was now that Jouvet was about to enter into his great period.



# 2

*The Comédie des Champs-Elysées*



## *Becoming a Master*

### *1922-1924*

*Key play, phoenix-play, St. Bernard-play, providence, protector and guardian play.<sup>1</sup>*

When Louis Jouvet accepted Jacques Hébertot's invitation to become technical director of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, he realized that from then on he must depend almost entirely on his own resources. He was prepared, however, to carry on alone, for he felt he had acquired the necessary knowledge and experience.

The Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, at this period, consisted of two theatres: the Comédie des Champs-Élysées and the Grand Théâtre. Both had been built by the Perret brothers before the First World War. There was an art gallery on the sixth floor of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, where Picasso, Braque, and other well-known painters used to meet and discuss their ideas. Since the gallery was chronically unprofitable, Jacques Hébertot decided to use the space for the establishment of another small theatre, later to be known as the Studio des Champs-Élysées.<sup>2</sup>

Jouvet was put in charge of the necessary remodeling of the

new theatre. Simplicity, utility, proportion were always his watchwords in any such undertaking. At the same time, he was not going to forget the artists who had a gallery in the building. He planned to reestablish the gallery, using the corridors and wall space above the stairs to exhibit paintings and sculptures. During intermissions, the audiences would have an opportunity to see the exhibits, which would be changed periodically and mentioned in the program.

Although people have denied that Jouvet had any hand in designing the new Studio des Champs-Élysées or in planning the art gallery, a letter written by Jacques Hébertot on September 2, 1922, does establish the point:

It would be very good of you if you would send me, if possible, on Monday before 3 o'clock, the drawings which Mr. Jouvet might have left.

In the last drawing we made of the staircase, we did not take the existing main beam into consideration and we will be forced to return to the original ideas for the staircase.

If Mr. Jouvet's first sketches still exist, would you be so kind as to have them sent to me.<sup>3</sup>

Since circumstances (mainly the distance of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, situated on the Avenue Montaigne, from the popular theatre districts) had sunk Jacques Hébertot in financial difficulties, he decided to ask the Russian Pitoëff troupe to alternate with Jouvet in the use of the stage of the Comédie des Champs-Élysées. His offer was accepted. Georges and Ludmilla Potoëff, brilliant artists and producers of plays by Tolstoy, Andreyev, Vildrac, Duhamel, and Pirandello, were as yet unknown in Paris except to the élite and *avant-garde*. The new venture would be a difficult one for both Jouvet and the Pitoëffs.

From this situation, however, Jouvet learned something important—namely, that the paramount need for any theatre is to be successful. That same notion must have been uppermost in Molière's mind when he stated in *La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes* that "The great art is to please." Heretofore Jouvet's primary interest had been in producing plays of distinc-

tion. Now he knew that in addition he must also interest a sufficient audience to make a success of the productions, for without cash in the till, the theatre dies.<sup>4</sup>

Jouvet also realized that to be successful in the theatre, he had to present a more balanced choice of plays, depicting human conflicts in a way comprehensible to many. He had to achieve harmony in his producing methods, that is, the author of the play, the actor, and the audience must be linked in a bond of mutual effort, understanding, and participation. This implies a mystical outlook, which is at the core of Jouvet's philosophy of the theatre.

Jouvet claimed moreover that when there was unity among actor, author, and audience, a mystical force penetrated the actor and endowed him with hypnotic powers in his performance, bringing his acting to a fine edge. He was convinced that when this potent force took hold, the play moved on as if by itself, almost miraculously unfolding. There was no sense of strain among the actors, and a refreshing sense of release and exaltation permeated the audience. The feeling of the actors that the audience was close to them and was truly living in the same world gave their art a sustained vitality. In short, both audience and actor had been sensitized by the medium, the play, from which a world of fancy had arisen of unusual breadth, drive, and vitality. Jouvet said that when the play was enjoyed, a dramatic harmony, or communion between actor and audience, had been accomplished. A dramatic work, an evening's entertainment was actually, or should be, a conversation among the author, the actor, and the audience.

It was not until March 13, 1923, one year after leaving the Vieux-Colombier, that Louis Jouvet was once again to experience the excitement, strain, and frustration of an opening night. The play was *M. Le Trouhadec Saisi par la Débauche*, a five-act comedy by Jules Romains for which Jouvet designed all the sets and played the leading part.

But rehearsals had not been going well from the beginning

and as opening night approached, Jouvet despaired of success. Although Hébertot was director in name, Jouvet had actually done the work and undertaken all responsibility for the production.<sup>5</sup> He was acting with an unfamiliar troupe; and the theatre itself differed markedly from the Vieux-Colombier, in which he had felt at home. Although the Vieux-Colombier had produced one of Romains' plays, *Cromedeyre-le-Vieil* in 1920, in which Jouvet had acted, Romains himself was hardly known to the general public as a playwright. Jouvet had to give his audiences a distinguished and vivid performance of a worthwhile script. The actor judged Romains' play to be clever enough, but not compelling. It tells the story of a naïve professor who wins and then loses the affections of a clever actress, Mlle Rolande, whom he had met while in Monte Carlo. Jouvet realized that the production must be outstanding to succeed.

Despairing or not, Jouvet had pushed ahead. While designing the décor for *M. Le Trouhadec*, he had followed a precise procedure which had already become part of him. Nothing was left to chance or to the imagination of the mason or carpenter; every detail was considered and dovetailed. His procedure was first to sketch in the basic plans, several times if necessary. Then he made a detailed drawing; last, a blueprint of the entire set. He was a meticulous and concentrated worker, a perfectionist; if he were pressed for time in the designing of a set, he might stay in his office a good part of the night, or take the work home to be finished there.

The stage setting for *M. Le Trouhadec* was charming. As the gray drapes parted, the audience looked out on to an ordered, restrained decor. In the center, there were two tall palm trees, placed rather far apart. In the rear, a reproduction of the Casino of Monte Carlo. In front of the palm trees, two garden chairs set at a distance apart from each other; there was a balustrade in the rear, and some flower beds.

When *Le Trouhadec* meets Mlle Rolande there takes place

a symbolic rearrangement or distortion of parts of the set to convey psychological implications. For instance, the tops of the palm trees were inclined toward each other until they touched in this scene, and the chairs were placed next to one other. After M. Le Trouhadec had won 14,000 francs and Mlle Rolande's affection, one of the chairs was placed in front of the palm trees, the other behind it. The position of the flower beds was again altered. The palm trees were set close to each other and their branches were turned away from each other. Stretching completely across the background was a band of blue, representing the Mediterranean.

Toward the end of the play, when M. Le Trouhadec had lost everything at gambling, together with the actress's affections, the palm trees were once again moved far apart and the tree trunks turned outward. Only one chair remained and the position of the flower beds was altered again. A single piece of scenery had been added, a lamp post, signifying, most probably, loneliness and old age. In the final scene, at "Felix's" front door, there were two lamp posts which stood far apart, in front of the palm trees which now again inclined toward each other. Only one chair remained and one bed of flowers. This set was rather heavily weighted with symbolism. The curtains then closed only to part once again to permit the audience to view a type of *tableau vivant*—a banquet given to Le Trouhadec at which a toast to his health was drunk by all the guests.

Jouvet had very carefully studied his part, that of Le Trouhadec, and his approach was rather complex. At one moment, he played the part in the spirit of caricature, at another, almost sentimentally, with satiric overtones; but all elements flowed freely into a changing but always recognizable pattern. Le Trouhadec was sly and cunning at times, at others honest and upright—a mixture of sometimes contradictory qualities, and yet in no sense disjointed. To impersonate M. Le Trouhadec, Jouvet wore a moplike wig and his mask was deeply

wrinkled. His voice was pitched rather high and, when he became excited, it squeaked. He was quite ludicrous when he stood still on the stage, his eyes half shut, tall and skinny, as if standing on stilts.

When Pierre Véber saw this startling and highly comical silhouette thrown against Jovet's astonishing *mise en scène*, he wrote: "Jovet staged this high comedy with rare intelligence; his simplified sets are a real find. He drew the most comical schema of the Côte d'Azur."<sup>6</sup>

But there were other critics, such as Paul Léautaud, writing under the pseudonym of Maurice Boissard, who felt that neither the play nor Jovet's acting warranted praise. Accusing Romains of having invented a fixed and stereotyped pattern for comedy, he concluded that the present play followed that pattern, was devoid of all naturalness, comedy and fantasy, and was indeed cold, monotonous and overly complicated.<sup>7</sup> He was one of several who felt that Romains' work was not sincere and that Jovet was disappointing in the role of Le Trouhadec.

Heaven knows if, until now, I always found talent in Mr. Jovet, a very great talent. That was because he always remained natural in comic roles, without ever, in any way, overacting. He certainly lacked these marvelous qualities in his interpretation of M. Le Trouhadec. The marionette to which he introduced us, with its tics, its faulty pronunciation, and its exaggerated senility, is at best suitable for vaudeville.<sup>8</sup>

Lugné-Poë, the founder of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, commented on the play's spontaneity; yet in spite of its many flaws, he said that "irony and good grace offer real relaxation."<sup>9</sup>

On the whole, however, the play was received favorably, and Jovet was satisfied with the notices in general. This was the encouragement he needed to continue. He knew now that slowly, very slowly indeed, he was winning an appreciative audience. Brimming with ideas for new works, new interpretations, and new stage sets, he was planning for the future. At the same time, he read broadly and thoroughly digested what he read.



Many plays were presented to him daily for his perusal, some by unknowns and others by authors already popular. Since Jouvét was technical director of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, it was his job to provide a repertory for all of its theatres: the Comédie des Champs-Élysées, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and the Studio des Champs-Élysées, which as yet had not been completed. So he had an exhausting reading schedule which he conscientiously carried out. In a letter written on August 8, 1923, to Lucien Aguetand, he suggested that the following plays should be produced either by him or the Pitoëff troupe:

## STUDIO

*L'Ecole des Femmes* (Molière); *Une pièce sans titre* de (Roger-Marx);  
*La Mandragore* (Machiavel).

## COMEDIE

*Le Mariage de M. Le Trouhadec* (Romain); *Le Retour de Christine* (Hofmannsthal); *Une comédie* (Ghéon).

## THEATRE

*La Tragédie de St. Agnès* (D'Ave); *Jedermann* (Hofmannsthal); *Le Saint Malgré Lui* (Ghéon).

Reprise [revivals]

*M. Le Trouhadec Saisi par la Débauche* (Romain).

Projet

*Une pièce* (M. Achard); *Une pièce* (C. Vildrac); *Une comédie* (Aristophane); *Une comédie* (Holberg).

## ORDRE DES REPRESENTATIONS

*L'Ecole des Femmes* (Studio); *Une pièce de Roger-Marx* (Studio);  
ou *de Ghéon* (Comédie); *Le Retour de Christine* (Comédie); ou *La Mandragore* (Studio); *Le Mariage de M. Le Trouhadec* (Comédie).

The Théâtre des Champs-Élysées was still undergoing physical alterations including the remodeling of the Studio. Jouvét did his share of manual labor since he liked to apply himself, and he could thereby save money, which was never plentiful. On August 22, 1923, he wrote Aguetand, remarking "At present they are building a cantilever two stories high in the courtyard, which should serve to increase the theatre's office space."<sup>10</sup>

Jouvét, who had drawn up the plans for the Studio des Champs-Élysées, now watched them take shape. Much of the

scenery was constructed inside the theatre itself to permit his supervision and occasional participation in the work. "We are also going to build a carpentry shop and a painting studio on the terrace, where we planned it, with access to the hoists of the Théâtre and the Comédie."<sup>11</sup>

The following letter to Aguetand indicates to what extent Jouvét was interested in the slightest detail of reconstruction, as well as the pleasure he took in its appearance.

The Studio is almost completed now, thank heaven, though Cordonnet has not finished the lanterns and we have not made any important lighting tests. The seats have not yet been installed because the upholsterers have not yet arrived, but the appearance of the auditorium is very pleasant and the leaf gilding gives a very warm tone to this little structure.

The two boxes in the rear, in particular, and the five small boxes in the balcony give a charming effect.<sup>12</sup>

This concentrated work continued all winter, and the following summer Jouvét took a vacation in the South of France. Wherever he went, he was constantly preoccupied with the theatre, sketching new stage sets, considering new interpretations, and dreaming of new costumes. He also met friends, authors, and artists and talked over his plans with them.

I took a wonderful trip to the South of France. I often thought of you at Oranges, Arles, Avignon, Pont du Gard, and the environs which you know I like so much. I am sorry you are not familiar with them.

The fortnight which I spent at the seashore after this was passed solely in bathing or in enjoying the fresh air of the environs. There I met Romains, Vildrac, Durtain, who are habitués of the coast. The countryside is, I think, very Algerian and one finds there only mimosa, palm and eucalyptus trees, and succulent plants.<sup>13</sup>

Jouvét was always a keen observer of the physical as well as the human scene. In New York City he had paid close attention to the architecture of the buildings and the layout of entire neighborhoods. In the South of France, he observed nature's color harmonies and noted those particular elements which stood out in any arresting way. He could sometimes pick out a detail of a building and store it in his memory for the day when it might serve his purpose in a background. His

talent for acute observation was a decided factor in giving authenticity and detail to his stage sets. Simplicity and clarity, his two salient characteristics on the creative side, were achieved only after a thorough study of all phases of the situation, and he gradually eliminated the nonessential until he got the effect he wanted.

The same characteristics were manifest in his acting when he appeared as the retired and idiotic general Foulon-Dubelair on October 24, 1923, in a three-act comedy by Georges Duhamel, *La Journée des Aveux*. For this production, which took place at the Studio des Champs-Élysées, Georges Pitoëff did the directing, designed the sets, and took the leading part. But Juvet, even in his insignificant role, was as thoroughgoing as ever in his approach; he studied every word and phrase, each gesture and effect until it was his own, and he was satisfied with the characterization. Max and Alex Fischer commented on Juvet's "rich sense of comedy," and others remarked on his profundity and the precision of his portrayal: "In a class by itself is the silhouette of the old general, worthy of a Huard sketch, which M. Louis Juvet brought to life, beyond compare."<sup>14</sup>

*La Journée des Aveux*, however, had little success in spite of some favorable notices. It was thought that the pace was too slow. But despite this disappointment, Juvet plunged ahead, preparing his next production. Almost two months later, on December 14, 1923, he was to achieve one of the most outstanding successes of his career in *Knock; ou, Le Triomphe de la Médecine*, a three-act play by Romans. He not only directed it and designed the sets, but played the principal role, that of Knock, a quack who changes the extraordinarily healthy mountain community of Saint-Maurice into a community of neurotics.

It is amusing to read Jules Romans' description of his meeting with the real "Knock," which gave him the germ of the play:

I met "Knock" on a road just as a grain of sand had gotten into my eye; and, as I clumsily tried to remove it, by raising my eyelid, he passed in a luxurious open touring car, stopped, and while examining the white of my eye, discovered that I was suffering from a deficiency of the pancreas.

I had to take to my bed and this malady still persists. It has become intimate, indispensable, and dear to me. I wonder if, without it, life would be worth living.<sup>15</sup>

As far as Jovet knew, this was the only comment made by Romains about the real Knock. He never, as others were inclined to do, pressed Romains for further information or questioned his veracity about the meeting he described.<sup>16</sup> He was forever grateful to Romains for this play, which, because of its outstanding financial success, enabled him from that time on to produce the works of relatively unknown authors. After every failure, Jovet would put this "money maker" back on stage to refill his coffers. For this reason he called it his "magic play."

It was a lucky day for both author and actor when Romains asked Jovet to read his new script; it initiated a relationship in the theatre which was to persist and remain highly advantageous to both. The year was 1923. Charlie Chaplin was in his heyday; Jean Giraudoux had just completed his novel *Siegfried et le Limousin*; the newspapers were commenting on Lenin's retirement, Mussolini's march on Rome, and the discovery of King Tutankhamen's tomb.<sup>17</sup> Romains, during lunch with Jovet, handed him the manuscript which the actor read right there. During the reading, Romains watched Jovet very carefully, noting the slightest facial expressions which might indicate his reactions to the script. Jovet, satisfied with it, offered Romains a number of suggestions as to how it should be acted and staged. To these remarks, Romains answered with a "perhaps" and "why not"; at times, he was evasive or even condescending.<sup>18</sup> Finally Romains said:

Listen, your ideas are very interesting, but I do not want to tell you exactly how I would like my play to be performed. I myself do not want to know as yet; at the present moment I could not explain to you what I want. But, during the rehearsals, I shall tell you emphatically what I do not want.

Bezín casting, show me the actors you have chosen, and when they rehearse, the rest will follow very simply.<sup>19</sup>

Jouvet accepted Romains' idea, and a few days later the casting was completed and the rehearsals began of a play which was to become so popular that Jouvet was to produce it almost every year until the end of his life.

To understand Jouvet's method fully one must sit beside him at one of his rehearsals and observe the proceedings during the few hours when actors contrive to create a world of make-believe. Jouvet generally sat in the orchestra to direct, while somebody substituted for him in his part. At the opening of the play, Jean the chauffeur lay underneath three footstools and two chairs, which were supposed to represent Dr. Parpalaid's broken-down old car.

Mme Parpalaid was talking: "Et nous avons eu de très belles rentrées à la Saint-Michel"<sup>20</sup> ["The receipts were very good on Michaelmas Day"]. At this point, Jouvet rose from his seat in the orchestra and said:

Don't break off, my dear, between "rentrées" and "Saint-Michel." It should be said in one breath, so as not to underscore the effect, which would leave the audience cold. Mrs. Parpalaid must say, "de très belles rentrées à la Saint-Michel."<sup>21</sup>

Jouvet tried to make the other actors on stage feel the situation. He asked them to center their attention on what Mme Parpalaid was saying. Then, pointing to Dr. Parpalaid, he continued; "Look at your wife who has just made a boner." At this point, Jouvet began to mime Dr. Parpalaid's role and indicated how the actor should react to his wife's *faux pas*—with immeasurable disdain. Mme Parpalaid then picked up the line, "A la Saint-Michel!" Once again Jouvet interrupted and offered a suggestion. "Be much more unsophisticated! And there you can use your slight head gesture." Then Mme Parpalaid said to her husband:

*Tu entends ce que dit le docteur? Des clients comme en a le boulanger ou le boucher? Le Docteur est comme tous les débutants. Il se fait des illusions.*

[Do you hear what the doctor said? Customers, just like the baker's and the butcher's? The doctor is like all beginners. He has illusions.]

Jouvet was still dissatisfied with this interpretation, so he gave his own, stressing the most important vowel, the "i"—*Il se fait des illusions.* Then he continued: "And there you withdraw one or two steps." Jouvet felt that while Dr. Parpalaïd was listening to Dr. Knock's philosophy of medicine his reactions must be studied and ingenious. His facial expressions must convince the audience of his utter astonishment at the type of medical schooling which Knock had received, for Knock had learned medicine by reading medical advertisements in the newspapers and medical magazines. During this rehearsal, as Dr. Parpalaïd was about to express his reactions to the crude charlatanism of the impostor, Jouvet rose from his seat in the orchestra, ran on stage, and placed himself behind the actor playing the part of Dr. Parpalaïd. He crossed his arms and stood in solemn meditation, the sort of meditation natural to a man who has failed in his chosen career and who is now trying for the first time to understand a different type of approach to his profession. Then Jouvet told the actor playing Parpalaïd that it was his job to interest the audience in his own character. This could be effected by the attitude he assumed while listening to Knock's "philosophy." Dr. Parpalaïd, almost alone, could bring the audience into the spirit of the play and carry it with him. Jouvet tried to make each actor feel that his part was the most important part, no matter how insignificant a role it might be.

In describing the people of the countryside, Dr. Parpalaïd suddenly bellowed, "Terriblement avarés, d'ailleurs," ["Besides, so avaricious"], Jouvet again interrupted, requesting him to speak the lines in a softer and more acid tone of voice and to accompany his speech with a bitter smile, indicating his chagrin and disappointment at this experience which had entailed financial loss and social disparagement. He had to make the audience understand this.

*Dr. K: Il y a de l'industrie?*

*Dr. P: Fort peu.*

[*Dr. K: Is there any industry?*

*Dr. P: Very little.]*

Jouvet requested him to sing out the "peu" and to stress the implication that there was slight possibility that any type of industrial activity could flourish in such a God-forsaken place.

*Dr. K: Les commercants sont-ils très absorbés par leurs affaires?*

*Dr. P: Ma foi, non!*

[*Dr. K: Are the merchants very much absorbed in their business?*

*Dr. P: Upon my word, no!]*

The "Ma foi, non!" said Jouvet, should be snorted out to make the audience grasp at once the essentials of Dr. Parpalaid's character, which is marked by obtuseness and lack of initiative. He is, in fact, an inexperienced, soft-headed provincial, inadequate in the face of any unusual situation. So the rehearsals continued. During Act II, scene 3, M. Mousquet, the druggist, made his entrance. Knock asked him why he earned only 25,000 francs a year when he should be able to earn so much more. The druggist replied, gesturing grotesquely, his dull, doltish manner serving to reveal the mediocrity of his existence:

*Dr. K: You have not, however, much competition?*

*M. Mousquet: None. (His right hand rose quickly.)*

*Dr. K: Any enemies?*

*M. Mousquet: I don't know of any. (Both hands rose quickly.)*

*Dr. K: In the past you never had any unfortunate experience, a fit of absentmindedness, giving 50 grams of laudanum instead of castor oil.*

*M. Mousquet: Not the slightest incident, please believe me.*

With these last words, M. Mousquet held both hands high, as if to ward off the sting of Knock's insinuations.

These exacting rehearsals were held every day from early afternoon until the evening. Jouvet spent the mornings studying the costumes and the stage sets in the making, taking care of financial details, examining electrical equipment and lighting, and, finally, outlining the work to be done by the me-

chanics and carpenters. He remained in the theatre all day long. If he himself were acting at night, he would remain after everybody had left to tie up the loose ends. Then, putting out his last cigarette, he would close the door of his office and go home.

Jouvet, with the cooperation of Jeanne Dubouchet, created all the stage sets which are still familiar to modern audiences. Looking back on this *mise en scène*, Jouvet thought that the audiences of 1923 must have considered it *extremist, expressionistic, avant-garde* to say the least. Many people, in later years, asked him why he had not altered and modernized the decor after having given the play so many times. He answered that he had tried in vain to change the sets several times, but "any innovation would alter the play—one cannot put *Knock* out of its environment."<sup>22</sup>

But in spite of the rich and unique humor that the play possessed and the long hours devoted to rehearsing, Jouvet was worried as usual about how audiences and critics would receive it. As opening night drew closer, this anxiety increased until it finally came close to panic.

I was worried, because, of course, I am naturally a worrier. And one must be. One would never know how to do anything well without this menacing and healthy uncertainty of knowing whether one is doing his best. I was worried and I found ground for worrying in all sorts of reasons and motives. I was worried by the strangeness of this play because the comic situations at times appeared to me to overreach themselves. At the end of the second act, for example, in the scene where the two peasants flee terrified from the doctor's office, or again in *Knock's* speech in the third act, which ends so curiously with an abrupt and quite clinical evocation. I feared the buffoonery of certain scenes, this mockery of real pain, of real suffering, so close to us by reason of our fancied weaknesses. The duration of the play also disturbed me; it seemed too short to satisfy the audience's appetite. I made known my thoughts to Jules Romains.<sup>23</sup>

When Jouvet confided this lack of confidence in the play's success to Romains, the author consented to the addition of a short play. Jouvet suggested Lord Dunsany's *The Silk Hat*. Romains read the play and decided that instead he himself would write a suitable one-act play.<sup>24</sup>



This decision was made at a meeting on Sunday, two weeks before opening night. At the conclusion of the meeting, Romains invited Jouvét to lunch with him the following Friday. On Friday Jouvét arrived at Romains' home on Avenue du Parc-Montsouris fifteen minutes early, just as Romains was putting the finishing touches to the one-act play *Amédée et les Messieurs en Rang*.<sup>25</sup>

When Jouvét had finished reading it, he was confident of its success. He felt of course that: "*Knock* is an original play; this satire on medicine will interest the public. It will certainly be a literary success, but not at all a box-office success."<sup>26</sup>

He was certain, however, that *Amédée et les Messieurs en Rang* would be a tremendous financial success. The next day rehearsals began. Jouvét directed, but did not act in *Amédée*. He suggested ideas for sets, which were designed by Aguetand and Lauer. His panicky feeling about *Knock* did not abate, and just before the curtains parted on December 14, 1923, he said to Romains questioningly:

How are they going to take it? I am afraid of the third act, which is very harsh, very gloomy. Will they feel the development in the second act? Act one will probably do because it is short, but my stage sets are not what I wanted.<sup>27</sup>

Jouvét's fears only abated when the final curtain came down amid applause and bravos. *Knock*-Jouvét was at his best. Indeed, the juicy role offered the well-trained actor extraordinary opportunities. It was in this role, particularly in the medical scenes, that Jouvét showed he was now a master of his craft.

But what essential, one may ask, constituted the excellence of his acting as Dr. *Knock*? In the first place, Jouvét put such spirit and vitality into it that he at once created a *moment dramatique* among author, audience, and actor, and kept it electrically alive during the action, while revealing facet after facet of *Knock's* character. Consider, for instance, Dr. *Knock's*

face when he examined a healthy patient. He looked over his spectacles, appeared mysterious and wise, asked just the right disturbing questions. Listening to his victim, his every feature was sensitized to receive and give impressions which the audience would understand. By this method (truly it was his power of magnetism), he took over the mind of his patients and, while so doing, savored his own mastery. When he conveyed his concern for the state of his patient's health, he had to reveal multiple feelings, each vivid and distinct, but none overdone, in a physical language immediately clear to the audience. Yet, while running the gamut of sly trickery and persecution, he also had to appear human, all too human, and his cleverness had to arouse in the audience a certain degree of amused sympathy, and even participation.

Jouvet was, of course, almost swept off his feet by this unexpected success; nonetheless, he told Gide who had run on to the stage to congratulate him,<sup>28</sup> that the best was yet to come—the one-act play by Jules Romains, *Amédée et les Messieurs en Rang*. The play was performed, and André Gide again came up onto the stage, but this time he raised his hands in a singularly belittling gesture, conveying the adverse reaction of the entire audience. The insignificance of this one-act play was obvious to all.<sup>29</sup>

Jouvet had made a masterpiece of the character Knock. It might be noted that his experience as a pharmacist and the years spent in the hospitals had served him well in furnishing a mosaic of detail. As a young man, he had observed his professors meticulously washing their hands before making a physical examination, and he had instinctively stored away the details. For many long hours he had noted the doctor's habits at the bedside of patients in the army hospitals. Before this, he had sat at the feet of prominent scientists and, watching them, had unconsciously absorbed their procedures and foibles. Eventually he worked all of this into his characterization of Dr. Knock, some of it solemnly imitated and some subtly cari-

catured. It was this composite that had drawn guffaws from the audience.<sup>30</sup> Jovet said: "One of my professors whom I liked rather well, with a goatee and a long mustache, who hid eyes of ineffable gentleness behind his glasses, is perhaps not foreign to Dr. Knock."<sup>31</sup>

As for the stage sets, which had been equally successful, he maintained:

It grew on me. It was not necessary, in this case, to have what one calls "discoveries." It was simply necessary to obey a mechanism of precision, to yield to the spirit of the text, as clear, as exacting, as regular as the bars of a score are for a musician. The tone, the rhythm, the movement becomes clear to those who know how to read. This is always the case when one encounters a genuinely great theatrical work.

When I play Knock, I first try to obey, to the best of my ability, this admirable and sovereign text. In addition to this, I have the sense of doing a physical exercise, a sort of athletic ordeal. I believe that this is, for the actor also, the criterion of a really great role.<sup>32</sup>

Now that the ordeal of the first night was over and the critics had acclaimed him, as well as the play itself, Jovet was very happy. But he rejected the judgment of the critics on *Amédée et les Messieurs en Rang*, and kept it on the bill. When it still failed to win a favorable response, he changed its place on the program, presenting it before *Knock*. When it still failed to please, he restored it to its former place. He was stubborn enough to want to prove that his judgment of its merits was sound. But the audience disagreed and applauded only *Knock*.<sup>33</sup>

However, despite highly laudatory reviews and even after 300 performances, Jovet still doubted its lasting value and popularity and once again asked Romains for his opinion, "Of course, it did not do badly, but will it last?"<sup>34</sup> But only time could answer this question. Seven years after the first production, in 1930, audiences were still as enthusiastic as ever about *Knock*. And Jovet's fourfold talents were now generally taken for granted: in acting, in creating stage sets, in lighting, and in directing.

All of his stage sets remain classical, because of his concern for architecture, become modern, because of his feeling for the mechanical element. We must realize that *Knock* either as a role or as a play, corresponds exactly with the best potentialities of Mr. Jouvet. But *Knock* is also a masterpiece because it contains, besides the comic dialogue, a plastic comedy.

Now, Jouvet inherited from the Vieux-Colombier, and following Mr. Copeau's example, this sense of plastic comedy. He transposed it. From a stern classicism, he succeeds in creating a rigid phantasy which is altogether contemporary. *Knock* as produced by Mr. Jouvet is incomparable. The work does not have one wrinkle, the staging has preserved its youth.<sup>35</sup>

So deep and living an impression had *Knock* made on the public that the role was always identified with Jouvet. Many people believed that he was in reality a doctor, and that the incidents in the play involved Jouvet. A rather amusing episode relative to this occurred in Jouvet's dressingroom in the Comédie des Champs-Élysées. A reporter went backstage during a performance of *Knock* to interview Jouvet. As he walked in, Jouvet had just turned on the loudspeaker which he had had installed in his dressingroom. This picked up all the noises on stage as well as the audience's spoken reactions. Listening to it while he relaxed on a sofa or changed his costume helped Jouvet keep immersed in the atmosphere of the play and in touch with his audience. After listening for a while, he said to the reporter: "It's crawling, isn't it? . . . Rather like a basket of crabs."<sup>36</sup> A mechanic suddenly darted in, with a bloody hand. Jouvet rose from his seat, examined the hand, opened a closet, poured some alcohol into a container, and sterilized the cut; he took out some gauze and with great professional dexterity applied a bandage. "There you are, young fellow. I hope it won't be anything. The only danger is that you may lose your nail. We'll see tomorrow."<sup>37</sup> And the reporter with great reverence, perhaps with a touch of mock reverence, complimented Dr. Knock-Jouvet on his unsuspected ability in a different profession. Whereupon Jouvet added, "Ah! ah! If I had as many banknotes as I've done tricks like this."<sup>38</sup>

The year 1924 was to be another memorable one for Jovet. In July of this year, he had asked Jacques Hébertot for permission to leave the Comédie des Champs-Élysées in order to take over the directorship of the Vieux-Colombier which was open because Copeau had resigned and was leaving Paris. Hébertot was amenable to this plan, but in due course Jovet realized that his program was unworkable. He returned to the Comédie des Champs-Élysées and took over its direction as well as all financial responsibility.<sup>39</sup> Thus Hébertot remained the director of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, subletting the Comédie des Champs-Élysées to Jovet and installing Gaston Baty as official *metteur en scène* at the Studio des Champs-Élysées.

Jovet, pleased with this new arrangement, said:

I was granted the possibility of realizing this project thanks to the great generosity of Mr. Hébertot, who showed himself most anxious to help me.<sup>40</sup>

He also had great plans for the future, including a revival of *Knock* for the following season. This time, however, he would replace *Amedée et les Messieurs en Rang* with a new one-act play by Romain, *La Scintillante*. Like Copeau, he intended to reduce radically the price of tickets for subscribers.

There had been increasing rumors circulating in Paris concerning Copeau's failing health, gossip about his coldness toward Jovet and about a discreditable situation which had arisen, forcing him to disband the Vieux-Colombier troupe in Paris. But on September 17, 1924, these rumors were laid to rest. In an open letter, *L'Accord Jacques Copeau-Louis Jovet*, Copeau dispelled the idle talk by announcing the agreement he had made with Jovet.

I asked Louis Jovet, my collaborator for eight years, to regroup, under his management at Comédie des Champs-Élysées, the various elements of the old Vieux-Colombier company. In addition to this, I authorized Jovet to produce the unpublished plays, the manuscripts of which I turned over to him, to revive all the plays of my repertoire, and to welcome into his enterprise various activities formerly grouped together at the Vieux-Colombier, such as concerts, readings, and such.

I cannot here reveal the reasons which impelled me, and so to speak, forced me to make a decision, which preoccupied my thoughts for a long time. And I don't feel that I am abandoning the struggle, since I am leaving behind me, to carry on with dignity, the two men who are my friends, two good workers, both of whom came from the Vieux-Colombier: Dullin at the Atelier and Jouvet at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, the public had no further reason for conjecture or gossip. Everything was clear, everything had been brought out into the open. Louis Jouvet was delighted to be able to engage for the Comédie des Champs-Élysées some of the well-trained actors formerly with the Vieux-Colombier, and to come into possession of their repertoire as well.<sup>42</sup>

He announced that the unused subscription tickets to the Vieux-Colombier theatre would be honored at the box-office of the Comédie des Champs-Élysées. In May of this same year, Copeau, together with some of the pupils from his Paris school, settled in Bourgogne and studied, rehearsed, and gave occasional performances.

On September 23, 1923, Jouvet received the following letter from Copeau, which sealed the friendship between them.

My dear Jouvet,

I am not old enough to live on memories alone. However, memories do come to mind as I prepare to wish you good luck. Remember the night when I surprised you in the wings of the Théâtre du Château d'Eau to tell you that the Vieux-Colombier was about to come into being and invited you to join me in it. Remember our first rehearsals in the small shed at Limon. Remember the nights of work and that feeling of peaceful satisfaction when, everything in readiness, we breathed in the freshness of dawn on the sidewalk of du Dragon Street. Remember my daily letters which you used to read at your quarters during the first months of the war ... and America. Remember everything that united us, our efforts a hundred times adapted to the circumstances, so many struggles, many victories. Remain worthy of these memories. I have only one wish: that you come closer and closer to them, as you grow older, that you love them more and more. You will find there, the spirit of work, of simplicity and devotion.

It is not only a repertoire, some collaborators, certain methods of work, a certain point of view toward our art which I should like to transmit to you; it is, above all, that living spirit which gives pride and beauty to all it inspires, lacking which one cannot create a work of art either great or durable.

I need not add that my good wishes accompany you. If I have confidence

in you, it is because I believe in your success. At the moment of trying your fortune, may you feel yourself completely free, but not completely alone. There is always an old friend to whom you will never appeal in vain.<sup>43</sup>

Jouvet now looked forward to the opening of the new season with eager anticipation. He had already produced two successful plays, he had remodeled the Studio des Champs-Élysées, had planned and completed the Salon de l'Escalier, and hurdled the first financial barriers. He had finally come to the pleasant conclusion that an actor's life is not so precarious after all if he is devoted to his task and is thoroughly conversant with it. But this was only an expression of momentary optimism; an actor is so much the plaything of fashion and of the whims of audiences that he can never be sure of his reputation and security from one month to the next. Jouvet, like so many actors before him, was to experience disheartening disappointments and some very bitter years, years filled with struggles and despair.

## ***Trials and Tribulations***

### ***1924-1928***

*The instruction of the text alone is the guide; the text alone indicates how the play should be produced.*

*To believe in the life and vitality of a play, to believe in its intrinsic value, in its message, seems to me, a little more each day, the way to approach the marvel of a theme, to move about in it and to present it to the audience.<sup>1</sup>*

For the opening productions of the 1923-1924 season, Jouvet chose *Knock* and Romain's one-act play *La Scintillante*. Jouvets' *mise en scène* for the latter play revealed to the full his powers of suggestion and vivid evocation. The bicycle shop with its twenty bicycles, and shelves and counter full of many types of metal objects, presented a sharp, brilliant and metallic impression, once again underlining Jouvets' penchant for the light and bright.

Valentine Tessier and Louis Jouvet played the leading roles. As Calixte, the Count's son, whose only desire in life was to sell bicycles at a profit, Jouvet added another striking role to his already long list. His sense of comedy was most telling when translating the innermost feelings of this cretin-like, timid, and ridiculously gauche person. Every time Calixte sold a bicycle above list price it was cause for unusual re-



joicing and excitement, and his speech became choppy and sounded "like dried peas."<sup>2</sup> At such times, his expression changed, and his blinking eyes opened wide in a stare as a smile crossed his lips.<sup>3</sup> He was tall, fleshless, and his yellow make-up gave him a jaundiced appearance. As Claude Roger-Marx remarked, Jovet's portrayal was cerebral in character; it was precise, metallic, and yet highly comic.<sup>4</sup>

Since Jovet had now become more sure of himself in his new theatre, he decided to revive three plays which Copeau had previously produced successfully. Jovet again acted the unforgettable Truchard in Emile Mazaud's *La Folle Journée*, and directed the one-act play by Jules Renard, *Le Pain de Ménage*, and the three-act farce by Roger Martin du Gard, *Le Testament du Père Leleu*.

Pierre Scize wrote that while watching Jovet act in these plays he had, for the first time, actually understood the meaning of the word "artisan" in the sense in which it was applied to artists in the Middle Ages. In the theatre, it indicated one who was an all-around worker, one who had a comprehensive understanding of his material and who could play many diverse roles in both comedy and tragedy. Jovet was one who fitted into such a category. Not only was Jovet a masterly performer but he also understood the complete workings of the theatre.<sup>5</sup>

It is interesting to note that during this period Jovet became even more interested in scenic problems and sound effects than heretofore. He would spend considerable time looking for objects which would make commonplace sounds, such as the banging of a door, the dropping of a book, a train whistle, and other noises which might be heard during the action of a play. He often told how difficult it had been for him to reproduce the factory sounds in Copeau's production of *Les Mauvais Bergers* in New York City. The sounds had to be almost constant, and interwoven, making something of a pattern as in music. The play is about a poor workman who had decamped, leaving wife and children destitute. Jovet tried

every conceivable instrument that might give the illusion of pile-driving and the noise of heavy factory doors being opened and banged shut. Two days before the production date, he still had not found what he wanted. Then, by mere chance, he hit on it—a thick wooden door which he had opened, slammed behind him, and which made just the noise he wanted.<sup>6</sup>

Gordon Craig gave performers sound advice when he wrote:

Go where they are painting the scenes; go where they are twisting the electric wires for the lamps; go beneath the stage and look at the elaborate constructions; go up over the stage and ask for information about the ropes and the wheels...<sup>7</sup>

Unlike Craig, Jouvét never tried to systematize his ideas. When, frequently, reporters asked him questions about the theory of his art, his profession, or his philosophy of comedy, he inevitably answered:

I am not a theoretician... and I consider him eminently dangerous who lays down ideal plans on paper, all the more so if he is competent and if he produces a play in accordance with his theories, because the damage he does runs the risk of becoming contagious and pernicious, like gangrene.<sup>8</sup>

He felt that everything in the theatre was in a constant state of flux. Therefore, there could be no fixed rules for the theatre, no set examples to be followed. Yet; though Jouvét would offer no theories, he had convictions, born of his experiences and reflections in the theatre. First, he believed that the actor should be guided by his intuition and senses much more than by his intellect (despite the fact that he was considered by some to be a cerebral actor). An actor could be great, according to Jouvét, only when he succeeded in creating "an absolute splitting of the personality," for only then could he impose the corporeal reality of his characterization on his audience.<sup>9</sup> But this precept is not easy to follow. The neophyte must devote many years to study and to hard work to achieve this end, and he must be sincerely and profoundly interested in his art. Jouvét found this extremely difficult, for every time he went on stage, even when completely possessed

by his character, his body succumbed to a certain nervous contraction, which affected him to such an extent that a kind of paralysis overcame him for several seconds. The calmer, the more self-possessed the character to be portrayed by Jouvét, the more difficult it was for him to be sufficiently relaxed. Sometimes he stiffened with fright and felt miserably inadequate when he tried to give the impression of ease and naturalness which a part called for. For this reason he felt that one of the most fatiguing roles he had ever assumed was that of Truchard in *La Folle Journée*; the role of the depressed old man who saw no happiness ahead of him in the few years of life remaining. Jouvét's muscles would contract to such an extent that; "When I returned to my dressingroom, I would at once lie down, dripping with perspiration, not from the exhaustion of my mind, but of my nervous system."<sup>10</sup> Yet, paradoxically, there could be nothing more relaxing for him than to act.

Jouvét had an odd and unpleasant experience with the production, on December 8, 1924, of a three-act play, *Malborough s'en va-t-en Guerre* by his old friend Marcel Achard. The play aroused some so-called patriotic French citizens because they thought it was a quite unwarranted satire on the touchy subject of the French and British armies.<sup>11</sup> Many in the audience, however, were charmed by the spirit of the author's jest. *Malborough* was merely a bit of delightful make-believe. When Malborough is killed, the audience does not grieve over his death. On the contrary, it applauds the outcome with great gusto, and considers the figures, historical or otherwise, no more than animated porcelain dolls. The play resembles a Viennese opera, colorful, comic and picturesque, where lovely ladies dressed in bright costumes dance like marionettes and express their sentiments in a delightfully poetic manner. It takes place in the realm of pure fantasy, weaving a lovely pattern of movement and color, much like a living tapestry of the *ancien régime*.

When Jovet-Malborough appeared, dressed in his formidable costume of horizon blue created by Jeanne Dubouchet, with outlandish armor and gear, and large plumes standing erect on his hat, he looked like a brilliantly plumed Don Quixote. He played his part with flourish, bombast, and braggadoccio, sometimes strutting like a windbag, provoking everyone to take a swing at him to deflate his pretensions.<sup>12</sup> The audiences were delighted with him; for, despite his truculence and bombast, Malborough was paradoxically a sympathetic character since he was so broadly human. Jovet impersonated him with great precision, richness, and wit, bringing out his characteristics with salient gestures, his weaknesses, his cruelty, his ambitions, his grossness, his despotism, cynicism, and even, at times, his melancholy and jealous spirit.<sup>13</sup>

Although *Malborough* won the praise of such critics as Henri Bidou, Antoine and Robert de Flers, it was not a success.

Jovet, however, was so well satisfied with George Auric's fitting musical accompaniment that on January 31, 1925, when he produced Romain's *Le Mariage de M. Le Trouhadec*, he commissioned the composer to write the score for it. In this latest play by Romain, both author and actor were to encounter their first really unsuccessful production in the theatre. The play differed greatly from *M. Le Trouhadec Saisi par la Débauche*, produced a year earlier. Lacking in movement and in satirical import, it did not impress its audiences. Those who had been willing to consider Romain as the innovator of a new type of comedy, replete with clownish drollery and subtle hilarity, were disconcerted by his latest failure in these respects. *M. Le Trouhadec Saisi par la Débauche* had been deemed brilliant by both critics and audiences. *Knock*, conceived within the same formula, was also a triumph and the keystone of Jovet's success. But *Le Mariage de M. Le Trouhadec* seemed to be an obscure, complicated, and rather obscene fable. The plot, poorly conceived, centered around the physical potency of a man seventy years old. Many of its

characters were caricatures—journalists, singers, members of political groups and committees, snobs, doctors, and somnambulists. The large number of roles only confused the spectators, and the author's attempts at comedy seemed heavy, labored, and crude.<sup>14</sup>

Jouvet, as *Le Trouhadec*, looked like a dummy filled with straw, which might, when but slightly jolted, completely disintegrate. Being a master of make-up, he emphasized Trouhadec's years, accentuating his premature age, which was the result of a debauched life. Jouvet conveyed this disintegration by employing a pathological loss of speech, or speech-block, which overcame him whenever he desperately tried to display his scholarly erudition, then he would touch his forehead, trying to jolt his intelligence into action.

Georges Auric's music was charming and cast a merry mood over this otherwise dull piece. When *Le Trouhadec* talked, the music softly murmured its disrespect, and when his mistress, Mlle Rolande, entered into a conversation with him, the orchestra played in a staccato-like manner, with skips, hops and jumps—a rough comment on her character. Thus, the audience was intrigued by Auric's musical impressionism and not at all by the play.<sup>15</sup>

It is notable that even Jouvet's *mise en scène* lacked the brilliance and evocative power which had characterized so many of his other productions. However, as a director, he was successful in handling groups and mass movements with spirit and adroitness.

Immediately after the failure of *Le Mariage*, rumors circulated in Paris to the effect that Jouvet would soon be forced to close his theatre because of a financial crisis.<sup>16</sup> The point was finally reached when the theatre was frequently invaded by police, bailiffs, and businessmen. The situation became intolerable for Jouvet; under these circumstances, he could no longer continue his work.<sup>17</sup> But he was not solely responsible for the crisis. He had a backer of sorts, who, Jouvet

claimed, precipitated the crisis; but Jouvét was not one to divulge details to the newspapers. However, he said that if his hand were forced, he would not hesitate to give the entire story to the press. As the affair dragged on, his bitterness increased.<sup>18</sup> That same day, April 3, 1925, a letter by Colanerie, Jouvét's financial collaborator, appeared in *Comoedia* defending his own position and belittling that of his erstwhile friend. He reaffirmed his twenty-year-old friendship with Jouvét and indicated that if the actor would cooperate with him, the unpleasant situation could very rapidly be cleared up. Moreover, Colanerie stated that he had been good enough to sign the contract and lease in question, which included many important financial obligations, to make it possible for Jouvét to lease the Comédie des Champs-Élysées. Now, he wrote, Jouvét wanted to prolong the contract by all possible subterfuges, without being willing to assume any of the financial risks involved in the venture. On February 15, Colanerie had asked Jouvét to take over the contract, offering to give him sufficient time to get the capital together to liquidate his obligation. Jouvét was unwilling to do this, and finally took the initiative by deciding on legal action. In spite of Jouvét's belligerent attitude, said Colanerie, the date for repayment would be extended to April 9.<sup>19</sup>

This state of affairs continued for several days until on April 12, 1925, an agreement was finally reached whereby Rolf de Mare took over the lease in question and promised to do all in his power to forward Jouvét's theatrical career.<sup>20</sup> Thus the heated conflict subsided, and, for a time at least, Jouvét was able to go about his business in relative peace of mind.

Meanwhile Jouvét had been engaged in the problems of the production of a new play, *L'Amour qui Passe*, written by the Quintero brothers. This two-act fantasy which takes place in Andalusia, was to be given together with a revival of *La Jalousie du Barbouillé*, which had been so successfully per-

formed by the actors of the Vieux-Colombier about a decade before. Although Jouvet did not act in *L'Amour qui Passe*, he directed it and created the lighting effects which communicated with extraordinary vividness the heat of an Andalusian midsummer's day. A radiant atmosphere surrounded the pretty young girls on the stage. Although the weather was intensely hot and calm, the wind at times caressed the pine trees, and this occasional movement, breaking on the complete atmospheric calm, infused the piece with a mild spirit of melancholy. The stage sets were in the tradition of the Vieux-Colombier—simple, colorful, and made to blend harmoniously with the costumes. A trace of realism in the landscape was evident, however, in the long, shiny blades of grass which grew in thick clusters between the trees. But in general, the décor was characteristic of Jouvet's methods of abstraction, and it possessed a vivid and evocative power, which lent much to the charm and romance of the play.

*L'Amour qui Passe* was not well received and, after only nine performances, was withdrawn. Then, once again, Jouvet's pessimism came to the fore. Not only had his play failed, but his funds had also again reached a very low point. During this period of financial strain, he and the personnel of the theatre were obliged, for the sake of economy, to construct the sets for their plays. Jouvet's situation was not to be relieved in the near future, and his finances were to sink even lower with his next production, *Tripes d'Or* by Fernand Crommelynck.

One afternoon, during rehearsals, Jouvet paid a visit to Antoine. Antoine complimented him on his choice of Crommelynck as a playwright worth producing. But when Jouvet informed him that the play was a social satire, depicting the vanity of wealth and the evils of capitalistic exploitation, Antoine's optimism retreated. He explained that "money" was a touchy subject to handle in the theatre and more than one author had met disaster by using it as a theme. Even

Molière's *L'Avare* was performed only eighteen times during his lifetime.<sup>21</sup> In spite of this rather bleak outlook, Jovet was willing to take the risk because he thought the play was outstanding.<sup>22</sup>

But neither Jovet's fine acting as the old drunken servant Muscar, nor the evocative sets, nor even the brilliance and originality of the costumes could sustain *Tripes d'Or*; the play fell flat. The next day, Jovet noted that one critic, with his characteristic vulgar jubilation over a failure, said of the play "Ces tripes ne valent pas tripettes" [These trivia are worthless]. Three days later, after having performed the play only five times, Jovet called it a day. Once again he was forced to place *Knock* on the billboards in order to recoup some of his terrible losses.<sup>23</sup>

During the run of *Tripes d'Or*, Jovet said there were more ushers in the theatre than there were spectators. One night, just before curtain time, an usher asked him if he intended to perform *Tripes d'Or*. Jovet looked at him questioningly, so the usher informed him that there were only thirteen people in the theatre, nine in the orchestra and four in the balcony. *Knock* had already been posted on the billboards, but Jovet appeared in front of the curtain to ask his sparse audience which play they had come to see. Three answered they had come to see *Tripes d'Or*, and five said they had already seen *Knock*. Finally, after some deliberation, Jovet decided to give *Knock* for thirteen people. He remarked later that the good will of his small audience, its enthusiasm and applause were as flattering to him as if he had had a full house. Two days later, *Knock* had rallied its old audiences to the theatre's support and the Comédie des Champs-Élysées was once again a bustling and busy place. Few plays, as Jovet noted, had this unusual power of attraction.<sup>24</sup>

Four months after the painful imbroglio attending the leasing of the Comédie des Champs-Élysées, Romains and several other of Jovet's friends began to explore the possibili-



ties of founding a "Société Louis Jouvet" to assure financial backing for his productions. On August 21, 1925, arrangements were satisfactorily concluded for founding such a society. A capital fund of 300,000 francs, raised by the sale to the public of 600 shares at 500 francs each, was established. Thereafter, thanks to Jouvet's loyal friends, his life as a director was more secure. In consequence, he was in a healthier position to pursue his arduous routine of sixteen to eighteen hours every day. The lessening of his financial worries again permitted him some peace of mind, not to mention the encouragement that the faith of his friends gave him.

And in a more relaxed manner he began staging Charles Vildrac's three-act play *Madame Béliard*. When Vildrac had first shown his play to Jouvet, it was entitled *Climat Tempéré*. But the author was not satisfied with the title, and during the summer months, when both author and actor spent many hours discussing it together at St. Tropez, they sought a new title. Another matter occasioned discussion between them; Jouvet was convinced that Vildrac did not understand Madame Béliard's true character, maintaining that the heroine was a frigid, subtle, and complicated person whose womanly instincts had never been fully awakened. Vildrac, on the contrary, felt that she was a nice and unpretentious middle-class woman who merely sought calm and security. In spite of these differences of opinion, the author permitted Jouvet to produce the play as he understood it.<sup>25</sup> Thus Madame Béliard was portrayed as a calculating woman incapable of falling in love with her devoted admirer, Robert Saulnier, played by Constant Rémy.

When he cast the play, Jouvet's funds were still rather meager (the "Société Louis Jouvet" had just been formed) and thus he could not afford to offer Mlle Tessier a long-term contract, not knowing whether the play would be successful. Dissatisfied with Jouvet's compromise offer, the actress signed a contract with the Théâtre de la Michodière. She opened there in a play which was a complete failure. In the meantime,

Jouvet had engaged Alice Bella to play the part of Madame Béliard.<sup>26</sup>

The sets for *Madame Béliard* were more realistic than the earlier ones. A typical office with large windows, from which the dye-works could be seen, included a cast-iron stove and a large desk. Madame Béliard's living room, the setting for the second act, was furnished with Dufrène-style chairs and an Empire secretary; on the walls hung several charming paintings, one of which came from Vildrac's private art collection.<sup>27</sup> Jouvet also borrowed a piano for the play from the Director of the Salle Pleyel.<sup>28</sup> He did not neglect or overlook a single detail in this set, so intent was he on trying to type a background for the piece. He even included samples of the blue-greens and reds of the dye-works and other colorful products of the family-owned industry. Some of the period furniture appeared definitely out of place; but the confusion of styles was justified on the ground that Mme Béliard was not a Parisian, but a provincial without distinguishing taste.

André Billy, delighted with the production of *Madame Béliard*, wrote:

Probity, sentimentality, delicacy, finesse, extreme clarity of scenic design—that clarity and artistic neatness which one savors with pleasure in the works of the young playwrights, and which no doubt constitutes a reaction against the boulevard improvisations, stands as their principal quality, as if it were the trademark they hold in common. Mr. Vildrac's new play will be a brilliant success. It has what it takes for that. And besides, what acting! There is not a role which is not perfectly portrayed.<sup>29</sup>

Benjamin Crémieux felt that although the play was less poetic in quality than Vildrac's preceding plays, it surpassed them in scenic beauty and psychological depth. Its sobriety, truthfulness and simplicity made of it "a perfect play."<sup>30</sup>

In the second play of the evening, Romain's *Démétrios*, Jouvet undertook the role of an adventurer, an unscrupulous and dangerous man. He was a black-haired, black-eyed, and black-mustached Levantine, intent on seducing the maid and the daughter of a well-to-do bourgeois family. His green tinted

face appeared goulish, eerie, and devilish at times. His red lips accentuated the sparkling whiteness of his teeth, and his gray jacket was an effective foil for the pink tie which emerged from beneath his large cape. White gaiters added the finishing touch to his fantastic costume. Jouvét could use tobacco with telling effect to emphasize character traits. He achieved an almost Forain-like caricatural appearance. He stood erect while curling and caressing his mustache with a single slick finger encircled by brilliantly sparkling rings. His suave manners succeeded in winning the daughter's affections as well as the father's bank account. But in the end, he was exposed as a crook wanted by the police of many countries, including those of the Far East.

The play was generally not well received and the critics, in their reviews, indicated a rising tide of resentment against Romain. They could no longer tolerate his overpowering conceit and bumptiousness. André Billy was among those who gave veiled expression to this general feeling.

The evening ended with an incoherent sketch by Jules Romain, Demetrios, in which Jouvét found the opportunity of presenting one of those most haunting figures of which he holds the secret. Everybody laughed a lot. Not I. I definitely do not go for Jules Romain's comedy.<sup>31</sup>

Louis Jouvét was now regarded not only as an outstanding actor and craftsman of the theatre, but also as a philosopher of theatrical arts, though he had never formulated a system. He himself had written several articles on theatrical subjects and had been written about many times. On January 25, 1926, he was to make his first major speech entitled "Theatrical Technique: The Theatrical Profession" to a packed auditorium of students of psychology and drama. The Pelman Institute had invited him to lecture during its International Congress of Psychology held in Paris. Jouvét was pleased to think that the Directors of the Pelman Institute, a center of psychological studies, should include the theatre in their field of study, and that they should single him out to be the theatre's spokesman.

After discussing in his lecture the interdependence of things theatrical, the goal of the director, and the functions of collaborating members and their contributions to productions, he passed on to the economic aspects of the theatre. He laid particular stress on the fact that the taxes now being imposed by the government served to drain the resources of a modern theatre. Of the thirty francs paid by the spectator for an orchestra seat, ten went to the government. Another sorry aspect of the economic situation was the necessity of price cutting of tickets; tickets were sold all over Paris at almost half price (for nine or ten francs) to attract audiences to the theatres. The director's life was nervewracking because he was at the mercy of the whims and moods of audiences and critics. Most directors, Jovet said, especially those at the Odéon, died in poverty or went insane; this had happened so many times that it had become a standing joke. The poet Banville used to tell about a coachman and his fare. The fare asked the coachman to drive him to the Odéon, at which the coachman retorted: "Sir, lower your voice, the horse can hear." In his lecture, Jovet also covered the more profound aspects of the theatre, especially the *moment dramatique* or *miracle*; finally, he pleaded with his audiences to keep the theatre alive by aiding it in all possible ways. This lecture gave him the reputation of an authority.

By now it had been brought home more clearly than ever to Jovet that his theatre could be kept healthy only by playing to full houses. By necessity he must stage plays which people from all walks of life would enjoy. While he had always avowed on this, he had not always practiced it. Now he was forced to do so. He therefore decided to produce Bernard Zimmer's latest work, *Bava L'Africain*.

Jovet had known Bernard Zimmer since both men had lived at 18 Rue Bonaparte several years before. They used to walk to their respective offices together every morning; Jovet to the Comédie des Champs-Élysées and Zimmer to the Haut-

Commissariat des Provinces du Rhin. After Jovet had accepted *Bava L'Africain* for production, they spent part of the summer of 1926 discussing the play together at Crécy-en-Brye. From February until opening night, April 26, the actors, director, and author worked steadily rehearsing it.<sup>32</sup>

In *Bava L'Africain* Zimmer treated a subject relatively popular in literature. The Bava type, a highly imaginative liar, has been exploited in France from Corneille's time to Alphonse Daudet's, from Dorante to Tartarin, and into our own times. Bava, a mixture of Don Quixote and Tartarin de Tarascon, was the spinner of tall tales about his fabulous trips to Africa, his great courage in tight spots, and his unbelievably narrow escapes.

Jovet, as both director and actor, avoided the usual pitfalls common to both. As director, he read a manuscript without being preoccupied with the thought of finding a good part for Mr. Z or Miss Y; as an actor, he chose for himself the role most properly suited to him and played it with mischievous gaiety. His long silhouette, accentuated by his colonial costume, a fantastic creation in itself, his dark skin burned by the sun, and his ludicrous mannerisms, made him look very much as one would expect Bava to look. His nervous twitching and his amazing gestures (particularly, his fussing over his pants which were too short and a jacket which was a little too tight), added broad strokes to the overall portrayal. Jovet again revealed his fine sense of impersonation, relating his adventures with perfect conviction and yet looking like a man prone to imaginings. Pierre Brisson, commenting on his portrayal, wrote:

Jovet made a startling creation out of Bava. Emaciated, angular, with a certain strange gleam in his eye, he gave this rustic Don Quixote an epic bearing, the memory of which obsesses one. It is admirably composed.<sup>33</sup>

When Jovet revived *Bava L'Africain* several years later, he worked on a fresh approach to it, as if he had never produced it. In a letter to Lucien Aguetand he stated that at his

suggestion the author had rewritten parts of the manuscript.

I am sending you, as you requested me, a resume of Bava. I must point out to you that Zimmer made a few corrections and added an act, while omitting another, which balances the play.

In Act IV one is present at Bava's death. He is lying on his bed, delirious, while Mme Soin, to whom he is asking news of her son who has sailed for the Congo, contrives a letter in which it is evinced that the memory of Bava is still very much alive in the African countries.

To enlighten the audience, an inspector of the Paris detective force arrives. He has come to hold an investigation with precise information about Bava, which proves that Bava never went to the Congo. The play ends with Bava's death, reminiscent of Don Quixote's, during which the gate-keeper, who had come to pay his respects, wearing all his decorations, stands respectfully at attention, while tearfully lamenting the loss of the great leader.

I think that this new ending is far superior to the other.<sup>34</sup>

Since Jouvét's attitude toward the production of a play underwent frequent revision, it was a rare play that remained unchanged once it came into his hands. A rewriting usually took place some time before the beginning of rehearsals. In fact, Jouvét would frequently have the author rewrite parts after the opening performance.<sup>35</sup>

As director of the Comédie des Champs-Élysées, Jouvét was always on the lookout for good plays. When the Vieux-Colombier had produced Bost's play *L'Imbécile* in 1923, it had been relatively successful. Therefore, Jouvét wrote to Pierre Bost on August 14, 1925, asking him for one of his manuscripts.<sup>36</sup> But unlike *L'Imbécile*, Bost's new play, *Deux Paires d'Amis*, was flat and lacked sufficient drama to interest an audience.<sup>37</sup> Jouvét himself gave little attention to the production because he was preoccupied at the same time with his next production, *Le Dictateur*, by Romains. Therefore, he permitted his stage-manager to direct and stage *Deux Paires d'Amis*. Bost did not blame Jouvét for the failure; many years later, he himself considered the play to be mediocre.<sup>38</sup>

Those who had been invited to see *Deux Paires d'Amis* on September 2, 1926, were astonished to find an exhibition of modern paintings at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées. The

idea of using the corridors and the walls above the staircases to exhibit works of art had long been in Jouvet's mind, but had not been realized until now. Some well-known contemporary painters eventually showed their works there—Lhote, Kisling, Friesz, and Vlaminck. Sculptures by the decorative artists Bourdelle, Arnold, and Besnard were also displayed.<sup>39</sup>

In contrast to the stained and often drab walls of most theatres, the clean, spacious walls of the Comédie des Champs-Élysées presented an excellent background and afforded the contemporary artist a fresh group of spectators every night. This Salon de l'Escalier became a permanent institution, as did the Salon d'Art Décoratif and the Salon du Livre.<sup>40</sup>

Jouvet read all the criticisms of the Bost play, but undiscouraged by them, began to stage Romain's four-act play *Le Dictateur*. *Le Dictateur* had previously been rejected by the reading committee of the Comédie-Française. As Paul Achard reported:

An unprecedented occurrence marked this incident. In general, and according to venerable tradition, the author awaits the verdict in the director's office. In this case, Mr. Fabre went to fetch Jules Romain in his office and solemnly ushered him into the committee room in order to convey to him, with everybody's compliments, the condolences of all.<sup>41</sup>

The reading committee was prompted to refuse *Le Dictateur* because of its subject matter and the possibly dangerous political passions which its production might stir up. After the press had commented on this rejection, Pierre Daladier, Minister of Education, asked permission to read it. Daladier enjoyed the play and wrote the reading committee, expressing his surprise at its rejection. He said that he would assume all responsibility for any political repercussions which might arise from its production. The play was thereupon accepted by the Comédie-Française. However, during the time which had elapsed between the first reading of the play, in December, 1925, and its acceptance in February, 1926, the author had given it to Jouvet who had already begun staging it for an

April opening.<sup>42</sup> But when Jovet heard of the Comédie-Française's change of mind, he returned his option on the play to Romain.

Fabre and Romain had many discussions about the production of *Le Dictateur* and later Alexandre, actor and stage director of the Comédie-Française, took part in these talks. Fabre decided to produce the play in October, 1926. But when Romain was informed in June that work on *Le Dictateur* had not yet begun and that it could not possibly be produced in October, nor even during the season 1926-1927, he was so incensed that he promptly withdrew it and returned it to Jovet. Once again, Jovet began to work on it. He engaged actors, signed contracts, and began rehearsals. On the evening of June 10, the Comédie-Française telephoned Romain, informing him that they would be able to produce the play in February. Romain replied that other arrangements had been made. On June 24, Alexandre proposed the following arrangement: the Comédie-Française would produce the play on October 1, 1926 and would take over the contracts already signed by Jovet's actors. Jovet once again relinquished his rights, suggesting that the press be informed of what had happened. But the spokesman for the House of Molière preferred to wait until after all the contracts had been signed. Two weeks later, Jovet and Romain were still waiting. On July 6, the Comédie-Française informed Jovet they were still interested in *Le Dictateur*, but refused to buy up the contracts which Jovet's cast had already signed. Upon receipt of this note, Jovet wrote Emile Fabre that he was going to produce the play and so terminated *l'affaire Dictateur*.<sup>43</sup>

Jovet's stage settings were evocative and interesting.<sup>44</sup> In spite of these stage sets, the elaborate lighting and interesting directing, the play was not well received. The plot was overly complicated, verbose, and too full of political discussions. The second act could have been omitted without loss to the play, because it lacked sufficient movement and was too weighted



down with a philosophy which was vague and never fully comprehensible to the audience.<sup>45</sup> André Rouveyre was severe in his criticisms, declaring that what he saw was a "survalorisation extrême" of the author himself.

Once again, Jouvét's funds showed signs of running out, only 80,000 francs remaining in the till. In September, Jouvét realized that there was hardly sufficient money left to pay off the expenses incurred by the production of *Le Dictateur*. Francen, Laffon, Vargas, and Mauloy were expensive actors and the daily budget for the play ran 3,500 francs in excess of the 2,000 francs Jouvét had allotted to it.<sup>46</sup> But there was one hopeful aspect in the situation; Charov, in the name of the Moscow Art Theatre (The Prague Group of the Moscow Art Theatre), had put in a request to sublet the Comédie des Champs-Élysées during the month of November. Charov and Guermanova, of the same troupe, represented the most talented elements of Stanislavski's theatre. They planned to give thirty performances in the Comédie des Champs-Élysées.<sup>47</sup> Charov was prepared to pay Jouvét 2,000 francs a day, which would amount to 60,000 francs a month. During this period, Jouvét could work on a play which he had planned to produce a long time ago, *Outward Bound*, by Sutton Vane.<sup>48</sup>

After the Charov troupe had terminated its tenancy, Jouvét resumed production of *Le Dictateur*. This time Le Goff, a less well-known actor, replaced Francen, and the cost of production dropped from 5,500 francs a day to 2,500 francs.<sup>49</sup>

With the return to a more normal state of affairs, Jouvét felt easier.

On May 22, 1926, Jouvét was made Chevalier of the Legion of Honor because of his outstanding work in the theatre. A modest individual, he took the honor in stride, though naturally pleased by it.<sup>50</sup> The better known he became, the busier he was, and since his manifold duties were increasing, he found it almost impossible to attend to everything single-handed. He therefore surrounded himself with a talented group

of co-workers; Lucien Aguetand for technical aid, Gilbert Perrin for construction, Bay and Mathis for things mechanical and electrical, Madame Helary for costumes, and Jeanne Dubouchet, his general assistant, for aid in the design and supervision of the construction of stage sets.<sup>51</sup>

During this period, by another stroke of good fortune, Jovet was able to free himself further, for a short time at least, from financial embarrassment. One October evening Léon Blum and his brother René, the Director of the Casino of Monte-Carlo, visited him at the Comédie des Champs-Elysées and invited him to open his new play *Outward Bound* by Sutton Vane at the Casino. René Blum offered Jovet 30,000 francs. He accepted. Moreover, René Blum would give him the money at once to help him out. On December 15, 1926, Jovet left with his troupe for Monte-Carlo.<sup>52</sup>

*Outward Bound* had been brought to Jovet's attention by André Maurois. After having read the work in English, Jovet telegraphed the author requesting him to hold the play for his option. Vane agreed to do so.<sup>53</sup> Vane had begun writing *Outward Bound* in July, 1923, and it was not completed until September, 1926, shortly before its production at the Everyman Theatre in London. Still quite young, Vane had already won world-wide fame as a man of action and free-thinker. In this play, he undertook the most solemn of themes, that of the afterlife. Since its opening in 1926, the play had been successfully produced in more than twenty countries. It had been translated and adapted into five languages. Paul Verola made the translation which Jovet used.<sup>54</sup>

*Outward Bound* was difficult to produce. Its atmosphere was a compound of comedy, tragedy, and spectacle, and the tone was eerie. If not well directed and acted, it might seem cheap and sensational. The curtains opened in Act I on an ocean liner, lit by bizarre greenish tints. An impassive looking fellow (Auguste Bovério) stood behind the bar, shaking cocktails. When the lights brightened, the bartender spoke in a voice

which seemed to come from a great distance, chilling and funereal. In time, passengers talking to each other entered the bar: Tom Prior (Jouvet), a tall, thin young man, cynical and an alcoholic; Mr. Duke (Robert Moor), a young clergyman inclined to good-will and charity toward all; Lingley (Robert Bogar), a businessman, at times choleric; Mrs. Cliveden-Banks (Suzanne Behr), a coquettish, vain, and evil old woman; Mrs. Midget (Jane Lory), a commonplace middleclass woman; and a young couple in love, Anne (Cécile Guyon) and Henry (S. Nadaud). In Act III, Mr. Thompson (Michel Simon), a clergyman and searcher of souls, made his appearance. Thus, Sutton Vane presented a cross-section of humanity.

In the stage sets, Jouvet attempted startling effects. He reduced scenery to a minimum—a mahogany bar, a few wooden chairs, small tables, scarlet plush benches, and portholes. Nonetheless, he still gave the audience the illusion of being on the ocean, and because of this, or partly because of it, enabled it to participate more intimately in the action.<sup>55</sup>

How Jouvet created the illusion of a ship at sea, the constant surge and roll which the audience felt so irresistibly, was not hit upon by chance. His first concern was to see that the scenery was not too pretentious, that it did not encumber the action or give an air of artifice to the play. He wanted to create a living ship, a ship going steadily on. To achieve just the right atmosphere, he had to suggest dark, foreboding overtones. The waves, which the audience could see through the portholes, partly served to create the desired mood. The waves undulated, shimmered; they rose and glided toward the mysterious line of the horizon. Their measured and relentless massive movement contributed to the creation of a slow, steady march toward fate, toward doom.<sup>56</sup>

To suggest was what Jouvet wanted to do above all. He selected elements indispensable to the effects desired and linked them together to realize a significant impression, which though delicately perceptible, was yet deeply felt. As he him-

self wrote: "Never ask oneself whether life is like that, but evoke life in its significance."<sup>57</sup>

What was essential to give the illusion of a ship's barroom was not so much the shining cocktail mixers, or the brightly polished pewter, or even the replica of a regular ship's bar; rather it was the movement of the ocean corresponding to the rhythmic intention of the play. Once this mystical correspondence was achieved it would communicate itself and carry the audience along in its sweep. Jouvett succeeded in creating this mood. His ocean was made of elastics—simple elastic bands.

My ocean consists of three dark-green levels which the projectors tint the various nuances of water. The netting hides the lower part and they are held in place by thin steel threads attached to the flies. These threads are connected with propelling flies worked directly by elastic mechanisms. The degree of intensity of the propulsion agitates, to the same degree, the three levels which are activated by the sides (about a man's height), with different horizontal movements, while the horizon line itself, a simple strip of linen which turns around two stationary pivots, slowly shifts.<sup>58</sup>

He had given long thought to the stage sets before the actual production of the play. In a letter to Lucien Aguetand he wrote:

A few hasty notes which I should like you to read with Maraval—to prepare for return.

1. First: the possibility of 2 casings in *auditorium* and *stage*, with lights. Green or blue or reddish blue, therefore have colored lights.
2. Prepare color masks for the klieg lights, etc., blues, yellows, greens, red-violets.
3. Projection from above if possible (or else from the prompter's box) for Thomson Siemens. Auto light, 6 to 12 volts—on a storage cell or on reduced current.
4. Prepare a new ceiling.
5. Prepare a ceiling—ventilator which would work while turning slowly (on a rheostat with reduced current with a voltage light), Act II.
6. The brackets are a little too large.
7. To have 3 supplementary projectors at our disposal in order to achieve an interesting effect (of the I type).
8. To work on an impressive siren—this is of the utmost importance.
9. A drum from Tournier or elsewhere, a regimental drum.
10. Mercury lamps in working order.
11. Stage lights 3 and 4 to be fitted with yellow, blue, and red lamps.

The touching up is to be done on the spot, and find out when we can have the lighting at the comedies. I will wire the hour of my arrival. Make up a timetable.<sup>59</sup>

In the role of the drunkard Tom Prior, Jovet added another to his list of brilliant creations. Tom Prior, poor weak soul, subject to hallucinations, terror, remorse and all the painful concomitants of these afflictions could only drown his distress in liquor.<sup>60</sup> Jovet ably communicated the progressive terror of Tom Prior. When he first appeared, he was outwardly calm and sipped his whiskey slowly; but when he began fully to realize his plight, together with that of his fellow passengers, his actions became more agitated, brusque, and sometimes incoherent; his voice quavered, and in many ways he revealed the fright creeping upon him, leading to inevitable desperation.<sup>61</sup>

This young alcoholic reveals his personality more through his acting than through the dialogue. It is not a question here of a passing intoxication, but of deep perturbations. There is no staggering, none of the classical drunken maneuvers, but abrupt, short, incoherent, futile gestures, choppy speech, a disconcerting manner of delivery, brusque effacements, and anxious glances.<sup>62</sup>

*Outward Bound*, which opened on December 28, 1926, was a great hit. Those in the audience who remained unmoved at the end of the first act could not resist the power and enveloping mystery of the second; they were completely won over, captivated, and enthralled at the end of the play.<sup>63</sup> Many considered it a faultless piece, faultlessly acted, with no one actor trying to outdo the other. Jovet himself was described as being "remarkably natural and anxious."<sup>64</sup> André Rivollet remarked that Jovet emphasized neither the tragic nor the comic aspects of this play, that he scrupulously adhered to the text.<sup>65</sup>

Now that Jovet had successfully produced a play by an English author, he decided to turn to a Russian writer. He chose Gogol's *Le Réviseur* (*The Inspector General*), a five-act satire on the mores of government officials during the reign

of Nicholas I. The play had first been translated into the French by Prosper Mérimée and was adapted by Madame Olga Choumansky and Jules Delacre for Jovet. Jules Delacre, of the defunct Théâtre du Marais in Brussels, assisted Jovet in the direction.

When Meyerhold had produced *Le Révizor*, his interpretation had been quite different from that of Gogol's time. This was quite natural. As Meyerhold said, every production should reflect the spirit of the age.

The theatre is entirely fiction; nothing happens except in the mind of the spectator; it is necessary therefore to intensify the vision, not only in its ensemble on which the attention focuses, but in a subtlety of details which must be so right and so striking that the character assumes an absolute intensity; and everyone adds to it, according to the impression thus received, the environment that he requires to feel the emotion of the incident.<sup>66</sup>

Meyerhold, greatly admiring Giotto, tried to create extremely simple, almost primitive stage sets. The characteristics of precision, careful preparation, simplicity, often to the point of abstraction, linked Meyerhold to Jovet. They were kindred spirits in the theatre.<sup>67</sup> Jovet's production was to recall, in style at least, that of Meyerhold.

The leading character, that of Klestakoff (Jovet), is a universal type. He is met with everywhere in official circles. He is, however, definitely from the Midi; fabrications and mischief-making seem to exhilarate him, and he lies as naturally as a dog barks. His conscience never bothers him. The type would feel as much at home on Ribas Street in Odessa, as he would on the Cannebière in Marseille.<sup>68</sup> Jovet's acting, which covered a wide range of expression, from the delight he took in planning mischief to his lapses into maudlin drunkenness, was permeated with a high degree of skill and subtlety. In the beginning Klestakoff seems unsure of himself and is whirled into the vortex of events instead of guiding them. He is frightened and timid about voicing his opinions and even stammers at times. But as he gains in self-confidence he finally becomes a

mischievous monomaniac, a reckless liar, in love with deception for its own sake. Jouvét expressed this aspect of his character with a gaiety and vigor that brought out all the exhilarating humor in it. Rober de Flers remarked that Jouvét played the part with frenzied fantasy and almost constant agitation.<sup>69</sup> His drunken scenes impressed many, because they were so right, so aptly done, so much in character. When Klestakoff-Jouvét attempted to grasp the arm of a chair to steady himself and sit down, the chair slid away from him, and he fell to the floor. This action might easily have been mishandled and achieved a reverse effect with laughter aimed at Jouvét himself and not at the character. But Jouvét's interpretation struck just the right note.<sup>70</sup>

We had to find a point of view, to redeem the incident of banality; rigid, he permits himself to be carried by his hosts; and, silent, motionless, with an anxious look and vaguely disturbed by that brutal warning, he imposes silence on the audience, as if something of weight were going to happen . . . It is probably by falling that he prevents this rather weak play from doing as much.<sup>71</sup>

Etienne Rey made one reservation; he was annoyed by Jouvét's confused and unintelligible stuttering and declared it unpardonable.

*Le Révizor* actually launches a satire on a forgotten epoch. Its characters are strange and might baffle or even repel modern audiences. But Jouvét's adaptation of the play made it comprehensible and thoroughly enjoyable. Etienne Rey was the only one to remark that Jouvét had gone too far in his modernization and had altered the play out of its true character.<sup>72</sup>

Jouvét turned *Le Révizor* into a farce, feeling that a satire on a nineteenth-century Russian county-administration could not possibly interest his contemporaries. So he made much of the grotesque and comic qualities of the play.<sup>73</sup> However, like Robert de Flers, many critics were of the opinion that Jouvét had overdone the comic elements.<sup>74</sup> But Jouvét maintained that modern audiences would have been repelled by the brute realistic nature of Russian character and might have

found the story hard to follow and altogether repugnant. By his added emphasis and comic distortions, the audience was able to understand the significance of the play and fully enjoy it.<sup>75</sup> Claude Berton was enthusiastic about the production, stating:

The interpretation of the *Revizor* is remarkable for its unity and color; the nuances are at the same time extremely vivid and perfectly combined and blended; with the result that the sets, the costumes, all the least little details witness the meticulous care taken and they have been merged into a harmonious whole. Each character possesses its accentuated physiognomy but without the grotesquely systematic arrangement of the circus figures... The *Revizor* is one of Jouvét's best production, whose decorative style, generally similar to that of an artistic poster, often lacks depth of background and places the actors on the forestage under a skilfully arranged but harsh light, without any upstage.<sup>76</sup>

Jouvét now felt so sure of his ground and of his place in the theatre that he decided it was time for him to be more venturesome and to aim higher. He planned to do a completely new production of Molière's *L'École des Femmes* and a Shakespearean play not yet chosen. He also planned to produce works by young French dramatists, such as Pierre Lièvre, Stève Passeur, Claude-Roger Marx, and adaptations of foreign works such as Ben Jonson's *Volpone* adapted by Stephen Zweig and Jules Romains. At this time Jouvét was working on the costumes and sets of *White Cargo* by Leon Gordon. At this period also, Jean Giraudoux, for whom Jouvét was developing an increasing fondness, began to visit him at his office in the theatre. Giraudoux was already known as a brilliant essayist and as the author of *Siegfried et le Limousin* and *Suzanne et le Pacifique*.<sup>77</sup>

Before producing any of the above-mentioned plays, Jouvét became interested in a three-act work *Léopold le Bien-Aimé* by his old friend Jean Sarment. Sarment had already submitted the play to the Comédie-Française at the suggestion of Madame Dussane and Léon Bernard, who had enjoyed reading it. Emile Fabre, director of the Comédie-Française, was far from enthusiastic. A week after receiving it, he returned



it to its author. Fabre said that neither he nor the reading committee could make sense of it, and they were convinced that it would be a failure. Sarment, disheartened, showed it to Jouvét.<sup>78</sup> Jouvét was so touched by it that he wrote Sarment the following letter.

My dear Jean,

I have just been crying while reading *Leopold* and I must tell you how attached I am to him—and in consequence to you.

I have nothing else to tell you.

I send my love.<sup>79</sup>

Jouvét was going to play Léopold. He wanted Sarment, a good actor who had performed in some of the Vieux-Colombier productions, to play the part of the priest, Léopold's brother.<sup>80</sup> The author was delighted to accept the proposal.<sup>81</sup>

The priest wore a black robe which made him stand out like a big blob of black ink against the shimmering variegated green countryside. Léopold, on the other hand, was somewhat odd; he wore an old conical-shaped hat, his jacket was carelessly buttoned, and in general he was clothed in mild disarray. Every time he leaned over, his shirt would gape. He was snappish and irritable; the priest was tender and conciliatory. Their meeting, after many years of separation, was moving. But their differences of character and outlook were always strongly marked. For instance, when they went fishing, the priest carried his rod in silence and Léopold, who considered himself an expert fisherman, harangued his brother with his weighty theories on the subject. When Léopold sat down to fish, he demanded complete silence, taking the sport very seriously, and pounced on his brother every time he started to talk.<sup>82</sup> But there were other sides to Léopold's nature. In order to bring out the joyful notes, Jouvét stylized his acting with somewhat attenuated geometric gestures.<sup>83</sup>

An amusing incident, which was turned to good use, occurred during a performance. Michel Simon, as the mailman, on his way to his dressing room, walked onto the stage instead. Jouvét was so surprised by his unexpected appearance that

he asked him what he was doing on stage. Simon, always ready with a witty reply, said: "I am coming to fetch some chicken tripe for fishing."<sup>84</sup> The audience guffawed. Since the audience's reaction was so favorable, Jovet and Sarment decided to incorporate the lines in the script.<sup>85</sup>

*Léopold le Bien-Aimé* was included in Jovet's repertoire during his tour from the 3d to the 22d of August 1928. At Divonne, on August 2d, Jean Sarment wrote the following note at one o'clock in the morning:

This is the first day, with a good beginning, in the small auditorium, the show took in 3,000—not so good. The company was good, Moor was good, Maraval also, and the rest quite up to them, Valentine, Lory and myself—good audience, but made up of neurasthenics, which is the malady at Divonne. They will not escape it. Goodbye, I did not want to open without sending you my greetings.<sup>86</sup>

Although *Léopold le Bien-Aimé* was a successful play, the director's lot was not enhanced by it. Financial burdens still accumulated—taxes, free tickets, increasing salaries, and expensive theatrical equipment added to the headaches of the director. Moreover, a new play by an unknown was all too frequently a costly experiment.<sup>87</sup>

Since Copeau had left Paris, the most talented of the theatrical producers were Baty at the Studio des Champs-Élysées, Dullin at the Atelier Theatre, Pitoëff at the Théâtre des Mathurins, and Jovet at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées. Thanks to their efforts and perseverance, they gave new vitality to the French stage, thus restoring the younger generation's faith in the theatre. Stimulated by their success, and hopeful for the future, they decided to group together for mutual benefit and protection, and so they formed a cartel.

The word "cartel," borrowed from the field of economics and politics, meant for Jovet, Dullin, Baty, and Pitoëff a working agreement and association among four theatrical managers who had demonstrated their abilities in the production of plays of outstanding quality. Moreover, it was also to be a cartel of good taste and honest intention.<sup>88</sup> It was not

a partnership and refrained from any declaration of common artistic principles. On July 6, 1927, the four directors met in Jouvet's office on the seventh floor of the Comédie des Champs-Élysées, and signed the following agreement, which officially established their association:

Considering the goals they are pursuing and assessing the numerous points upon which they ought to and can help each other, the undersigned: . . . Gaston Baty, Charles Dullin, Louis Jouvet, Georges Pitoëff, form an association based on the professional esteem and reciprocal respect which they have for one another. They pledge their honor to respect it in spirit and letter.

This association studies all questions of a professional nature and makes the decisions which concern it in common.

Each one of the associates preserves his complete artistic liberty and remains sole master of his work.

The statutes of the association will be established as the unanimous decisions are decided upon, but now and henceforth, the undersigned promise to show a united front in all cases where the professional or moral concerns of anyone may be in question.<sup>89</sup>

The members of the Cartel consulted and acted together before taking a stand on any public matter. It was agreed that all would place announcements and advertisements in the newspapers and magazines in the least expensive fashion, and that they could borrow actors from each other when available. The Cartel was extended in emergencies to include temporary financial help by the group as a whole to any of the four in distress.<sup>90</sup> The Cartel watched with interest the dramatic trends in foreign countries; this eventually brought about adaptations and productions of plays by Pirandello, Ibsen, Jonson, Shakespeare, Gogol, and others. It must be noted, however, that Lugné Poë and Antoine had both introduced foreign playwrights to the French stage; the Cartel did not pioneer in this respect, but rather enriched the movement.

At one meeting of the Cartel the members decided to take a decisive step against latecomers whose noisy entrances into the theatres were annoying both to actors and audiences. The Cartel decided to make them stay in the lobby until the end of the scene. This decision, which seemed but a minor matter,

was to have major consequences, and the reverberations of what ensued were to be heard all over Paris. The Cartel seemed to have failed to consider, before taking this step, the fact that similar decisions had been made by several directors who later on were forced to cancel them; criticism from many quarters called the action presumptuous and dictatorial.<sup>91</sup>

The crucial test for the Cartel came on January 25, 1928 at the Atelier Theatre where Zimmer's fantasy *The Birds*, adapted from Aristophanes, was having its first performance. A comedy of errors and recriminations began that night when Dullin, the director of the Atelier Theatre, anticipating that latecomers would be both numerous and noisy, decided to exclude them even from the lobby; by his order the front doors of the theatre were closed when the first act began. Unfortunately, among those forced to remain standing in the cold on the Place Dancourt was the eminent French critic Fortunat Strowski. When René Bruyez, secretary-general of the Atelier Theatre, found out about this "affront," he was indignant. Strowski was a friend of his and, perhaps what is more important, had commented very favorably on his recent play *La Puissance des Mots*. Thus, Strowski was looked on as a vested interest whose good humor had to be preserved at all costs. Paul Ginisty, president of the Cercle de la Critique, now took a hand, and thundered his righteous indignation at the insult offered Strowski; he demanded that Dullin make public apology for the offense. Dullin flatly refused. He had already suffered sufficient distress on the crucial evening (the police had to hold back the crowds who started to throw stones at the theatre), and he would not be dragged further into the imbroglio. Since Dullin ignored Ginisty's demand for public apology, Ginisty felt that he had to take a stronger stand against the Cartel and he asked his fellow reporters to boycott the Atelier's production.<sup>92</sup> As a result, tempers became still more heated. Dullin, carried away by anger, was rash enough to remark that the critics' function nowadays was

obsolete and futile anyway. Then Pitoëff, in a letter to the Syndicat de la Presse Parisienne, writing in the name of the big four, said that if a boycott were put into effect, the Cartel would withdraw its advertising from the newspapers involved. This was a counterthreat which stung the critics and threatened the pocketbooks of the newspaper proprietors. In turn, Ginisty wrote a scathing letter to *Comoedia*, protesting against Dullin's insulting remark and Jouvét's article recounting the affair which had appeared in the program notes of the Comédie des Champs-Élysées.<sup>93</sup>

Now that the threat of one side had been met with an equal threat from the other, passions ebbed and self-interest prevailed. The turmoil gradually died down. However, so widespread was the report of this feud in Paris that the public took sides and some intellectuals compared this squabble to the *Bataille d'Hernani* which took place in 1830. An amusing ditty, *Balade sur la Place Dancourt*, was written describing the incident.

Similar incidents had occurred in the past. At the Théâtre des Mathurins, for instance, when Pitoëff produced *Maison des Coeurs Brisés*, he shut the doors against latecomers. The same exclusion was practiced at the Théâtre du Gymnase, but in neither instance were tempers detonated. Disappointed or annoyed, the latecomers sat, smoked, and chatted at the Marguery next door until they could be admitted into the theatre. But unfortunately, the Atelier could not provide such comforts for the tardy.<sup>94</sup>

Despite this incident, Jouvét continued his feverish pace, and on March 28, 1928, produced Zimmer's *Le Coup du Deux Décembre*, in which he himself interpreted the police magistrate M. Lèbre. Zimmer was gifted with imagination, audacity, and a talent for creating strange and convincing character-types. He was also possessed of a strange sense of humor which led him to create eccentric and fantastic characters. In this play Zimmer aimed his satire at the provincial bourgeoisie

who so inflexibly adhere to moribund conventions. He had visualized his play as a spirited comedy, and not the bitter, somber, and melancholy play into which he said Jouvot turned it.<sup>95</sup>

Looking stiffly dignified and imposing, Jouvot-Lèbre walked on stage, dressed in a black jacket and trousers whose perpendicular lines accentuated his tall figure. He acted somewhat like a stylized automaton moving in a trance.<sup>96</sup> Paul Achard enjoyed Jouvot's solemn rigidity.<sup>97</sup> But Lucien Dubech criticized him for his flat speech and unclear articulation.<sup>98</sup>

The sets were important because they so successfully conveyed the tight and narrow atmosphere of a provincial town.<sup>99</sup> Zimmer was impressed by Jouvot's insight and skill; he managed by his "interesting stage sets to add without betraying or encumbering."<sup>100</sup> In Act I, in Madame Lèbre's dining room, tightness and torpidity are expressed in the following manner; at first, the stage appears in total obscurity, then the light slowly diffuses itself, and a dreary provincial room emerges. The room is furnished with a large buffet, Henri Deuxième type, a table in the center, chairs, two paintings which are hardly discernable, a green hanging lamp which projects a violent circle of light on the table, and two doors which seem to be the only bright spots in the room.<sup>101</sup> Act II takes place in the attic of the house and is in sharp contrast to the first. The sun enters from all directions, from the windows, the open doors, from the skylight; the total effect produces bright lights, shifting shadows, and half-tones. There are birds singing and fluttering outside the windows. The attic, with its helter-skelter disorder is characteristic and again revealing of the acquisitive habits of such a provincial family. These sets told the audience much about the characters. In the attic, there was an accumulation of old chairs, books, a zinc bathtub, plaster mannequins, two old flags, a globe, and a scattering of artificial flowers.<sup>102</sup> Act III, similar to Act I, took place in the Lèbre dining room. But the windows which had been

shut in Act I were opened and two flags and two illuminated street lamps were visible in the distance. At intervals, the noises accompanying the festivities could be heard together with the strains of a merry-go-round and the rattling of wheels on rough pavement.<sup>103</sup>

It was a *mise en scène* designed to give background and reveal characters in a selective way, and in this it was successful. Pierre Brisson remarked that the staging was conceived with "a precise and colorful art."<sup>104</sup> Jouvét's selective realism was in complete opposition to the absolute realism which had its heyday in Antoine's time and which still remained popular in many boulevard theatres. Jouvét disliked faked or painted scenery, though he had felt it necessary to use it in *Knock* to make more emphatic the caricatural element in the play. He liked real wooden doors, real chairs, real moleskin or plush seats; sometimes, in order to heighten and brighten his effects, he used glittering or shiny materials, oilcloth or even cellophane, but always in a selective or as André Boll called it "synthetic" manner. To suggest, not to represent, the small detail indicating a large meaning, would, for Jouvét, be more effective in revealing diverse and complex human traits than total realism, which is merely a series of representations, replicas of familiar interiors to astound naïve minds. Jouvét was an artist, determined to present with clarity an atmosphere suggestive in tone and convincing in impression. This lent a distinctive artistic quality to his stage sets, which were simple, unpretentious, and selectively detailed.

Had not Antoine's criticism been so severe, *Le Coup du Deux Décembre* might have lasted longer. Antoine not only disparaged the acting and the cast's poor diction, but attacked the production as a whole.<sup>105</sup> Zimmer, Jouvét's loyal friend, took up the cudgel and wrote Antoine the following:

What material detriment your wholesale condemnation may bring about, and more, to the very theatre which Jouvét manages. As a matter of fact, for an audience of today, what is of importance in a play? Casting and

casting alone! The public does not know the author's name, it disregards the theme of the play, and does not attach great importance to the text; but if a voice carrying authority whispers to it, "Go! there is a play well acted! you will be delighted with it." It quickly hurries there, but it will still more quickly refrain from going, if one broadcasts the contrary.<sup>106</sup>

Antoine replied that the play's bright and audacious dialogue could not offset the mediocrity of the interpretation, reiterating his censure of Jovet "who had the unfortunate idea of exaggerating his already bizarre diction with a useless southern accent." He concluded by saying that the *avant-garde* theatres were now sufficiently healthy financially and otherwise to withstand the shock of noncoddling criticism.<sup>107</sup>

Jovet himself was too busy to enter into these polemics. Two or three hundred plays were submitted to him yearly and he made it a point to read a play a day, despite his many duties and obligations. The mass of work confronting Jovet imposed on him a hard, fast schedule and a disciplined life. Once Jovet had selected his play, he would think about it for months, even for years, as in the case of *L'Ecole des Femmes*. Consciously or unconsciously he hovered over it. It would come and go in his fancy, as if it had a life of its own. Gradually the play would reach deep into his very being and the living scenes would take shape; when it had achieved a definite form he would tackle the script in detail and then when satisfied that he had got all he could out of it, he might schedule it for production.<sup>108</sup>

Jovet was now more interested than ever in the use of accessories in stage sets. His more refined and cunning use of them had certainly marked a change, though perhaps it was only a matter of emphasis. He and Copeau had even planned to write a book together on the subject, stressing the mystical side of stage decorations. As stage-manager at the Vieux-Colombier, Jovet kept lists of stage accessories required for the various sets, somewhat similar to the *Mémoire* of Mahelot. He not only liked to compare the lists of accessories kept by various stage-managers in different countries but also those



accessories suggested by the author and those finally decided upon by the director. In Dumas' play *La Femme de Claude*, a significant part was played by a double-barreled Winchester rifle. It was important as a dramatic adjunct, and in fact, essential to the play, which could not have been produced without it. Jovet disdained plays which required essential adjuncts as being somewhat mechanical and rigid; for this reason he respected Molière and Shakespeare.

However, times have changed radically in favor of comfort and abundance of possessions. Since people are surrounded by furniture, gadgets, and accessories in their daily living, it is natural for them to expect to see the same on the stage; they respond accordingly by relishing details and objects close to their daily living. No one was more aware of this than Jovet, but simplicity was always his aim and he used his technique of simplicity to dissociate the complex and, merely to suggest overabundance as in *Le Coup du Deux Décembre*. However, he did not fail to use many realistic details if the play called for them. But it was his principle to suggest rather than to imitate.

It was at this time that Jovet was to establish a working relationship with a writer whose plays were to mean much to him in the furtherance of his career as actor, director, and interpreter of life.

## *Jouvet and Giraudoux*

### *1928-1934*

*One would even be grateful to a God for such metamorphosis, and I am avenging myself for the modesty which obliged me to keep silent on the subject of Jouvet the director by expressing my admiration for Jouvet the actor and by hailing him as one of the greatest actors that the French stage has known.<sup>1</sup>*

Jouvet's meeting with Giraudoux was an event destined to be of great moment to both of them. And Jouvet's production of *Siegfried*, the author's first play, was to establish another landmark in Jouvet's career. Antoine wrote:

The coming of Jean Giraudoux into the theatre is an event which will have deep repercussions on the contemporary dramatic movement; I recognize that same impression which François de Curel produced, when he surged into prominence in 1891, in the evolution of realism.<sup>2</sup>

Zimmer introduced Giraudoux to Jouvet just before the production of *Bava L'Africain* in 1926. Zimmer worked in the same government offices as Giraudoux, at 3 Rue François Ier—Zimmer at the Haut-Commissariat des Provinces du Rhin and Giraudoux at the Bureau des Oeuvres Françaises à l'Étranger. Had Zimmer not invited Jouvet and Giraudoux to lunch with

him at the Parc Montsouris, the French theatre might have had a less brilliant future, without the stimulation and support of a rare talent.<sup>3</sup>

In 1922, Giraudoux published a novel called *Siegfried et le Limousin*, which he said he had written in twenty-seven days. It was a difficult novel with a precious and recondite vocabulary and far-fetched allusions to obscure events; the reader was not enlightened but confused by the lengthy political and philosophical discussions. The novel lacked the drama and tension which were to be characteristic of the author's plays.

One day someone asked Giraudoux to submit an article for the *Mélanges* in honor of Charles Andler, the author's former German teacher. As his contribution, Giraudoux took an episode from the book and transposed it for the stage. This was the first step taken toward what eventually was to result in the play *Siegfried*.

Giraudoux said that he turned his novel into a play for various reasons. First, he felt that, politically speaking, the time was ripe for it; the strain between France and Germany had been increasing, and he foresaw an inevitable conflict unless there was a clearing of the air. As he had something to say which might have a salutary effect on both countries and lessen tension. "One had to express oneself . . . to make oneself understood."<sup>4</sup>

Second, Giraudoux thought the dramatic content of the novel was well suited to the stage. The story was refreshing, original, pertinent; it concerned a French soldier who lost his memory after receiving a severe head wound in a battle during the First World War. He lay on the battlefield unconscious until picked up by some German soldiers, who took him for one of their own. While hospitalized, he was given the name of Siegfried, and in time, he became an outstanding German political figure. When French friends eventually heard his story, they studied his case, and were convinced that he was Jacques Forestier, their old friend. They got in touch

with him and after overcoming some difficulties, repatriated him.

The third reason for turning to the stage was the pleasure Giraudoux derived from working with actors. He was attracted to those devoted men and women who were capable of giving themselves unstintingly to the creation of a world of fancy which might endure only briefly and would soon be forgotten. If a play failed, all their efforts would have been in vain. Yet, they never hesitated to accept the challenge, and did not bemoan a failure. Such dedication appealed to Giraudoux. Great plays, in his opinion, were like the cathedrals of the Middle Ages, the product of communal effort, a dream brought to life by selfless aspiration.<sup>5</sup>

Giraudoux began working on his play. A month later, on a Sunday morning, he arrived at the home of the critic Benjamin Crémieux at Rue du Pré-aux-Clercs with a heavy folder containing *Siegfried*. Crémieux read it and found it interesting, but unplayable. It lacked pace and would have consumed three or four evenings. But it had the makings of sound drama.<sup>6</sup>

Later, under Jouvét's guidance, Giraudoux whittled it down. He eliminated much and altered a great deal, save for the second act, in which there were few revisions. Jouvét taught Giraudoux how to underscore salient traits of his characters and develop the tensions among characters, how to point up dialogue, tighten loose ends and omit whatever did not contribute to the action or the play or the development of a character.<sup>7</sup> The result was that all flashy literary material was eliminated, and the story line was clear. At Jouvét's prompting, the play was rewritten seven times.<sup>8</sup> Giraudoux himself confessed, "It gave me great pleasure to rewrite *Siegfried* several times. The play was not just like the one now being performed. We worked on it until the very last moment."<sup>9</sup>

In the first version of the play, the action took place in Munich and there were thirty-six characters. The play was

entitled *Siegfried von Kleist*, and famous contemporaries, such as Marshal von Hindenburg and General Ludendorf, were in the cast of characters. In the final version, the scene was Gotha, and there were only eighteen characters. The title was shortened to *Siegfried* and living personalities were eliminated.<sup>10</sup>

It can now be seen what an immeasurable debt Giraudoux owed to Jouvet. Jouvet taught him the fundamental techniques of creating a drama, underscoring the line of action, developing and dramatizing the story. He showed him how to round out his characters and give them depth and authenticity.<sup>11</sup> Most important of all, Jouvet made Giraudoux feel spiritually at home in the theatre; and under his guidance Giraudoux became a notable playwright. But Jouvet, in turn, owed a great deal to Giraudoux. In Giraudoux's plays, Jouvet found the most suitable outlet for his talents, and with the introduction of Giraudoux's completely new and fascinating style of play-writing, Jouvet reached his peak in the French theatre.<sup>12</sup>

Jouvet had difficulty in finding an actor fitted to play the role of Siegfried. The newspapers predicted the choice would fall on Alcover or Pierre Blanchar. But Pierre Renoir, son of the famous painter, was eventually chosen. As an actor he had played almost exclusively at the Boulevard theatres.<sup>13</sup> One morning, he received a telephone call from the writer Pierre Lestringuez, who asked him whether he would accept the role of Siegfried in Giraudoux's play. Renoir said that he would; but the unexpected offer astonished him since only the day before he had had lunch with Giraudoux, and the latter had never even broached the subject to him. Lestringuez attributed this lapse to Giraudoux's shyness, or perhaps his love of indirection.<sup>14</sup> The choice of Pierre Renoir for the role of Siegfried was a brilliant one. Henceforth, Renoir was to remain with Jouvet and become an extremely important adjunct of the group.<sup>15</sup>

The rehearsals for *Siegfried* began on March 9, 1928. The actors had to learn a new technique for speaking their lines

and had to approach the play with a sense of its subtle and poetic atmosphere. No theatricality was permitted in the dialogue. Giraudoux's prose was so written and his phrases so turned that any undue emphasis would break up the continuous smooth flow of words or obliterate subtle overtones and disrupt the mood. The actors had to accept the discipline of learning a distinctly new style. Their voices were so trained as to seem akin to musical instruments making exquisite verbal music. During the long rehearsals, Jouvet would sit next to Giraudoux, tensely watching the proceedings. Characteristically he would remark to one of the actors: "You're trying too hard. Simply speak your lines, don't act them out."<sup>16</sup>

Jouvet acted the relatively minor role of Fontgelo, general of the Death's-head Hussars. He played it in the spirit of realism. He was a Prussian general to the core—dry, authoritarian, arrogant, brusque. He was a martinet, too, with a rigid mentality; he had forgotten nothing and learned nothing; he blamed France for the damage done by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. André Rouveyre described Jouvet's performance of the role as overwhelming.<sup>17</sup> François Ambrière called it unforgettable.<sup>18</sup>

Since Jouvet could spend relatively little money on costumes, he made only one purchase for his part, a pair of boots. The rest of his uniform was put together with odds and ends of clothing he found in the theatre's lumber room.

He had found, I don't know where, a German military stationmaster's cap, from which he removed the white band, and which served very well as a kepi. An old black raglan from his personal wardrobe, duly altered, was transformed without difficulty into a field coat for a Death's-head Hussar general.<sup>19</sup>

Jouvet as usual was nervous on the opening night and extremely anxious about the success of the play. Before the curtains parted, he pessimistically confided to Zimmer and his wife: "It won't make a dime! But to have produced this play will be the crowning achievement of my life."<sup>20</sup> As the

performance progressed, however, the audience was held by it. Benjamin Crémieux wrote that

*Siegfried* marks a date, a point of departure, a new hope. It marks the theatre's escape from naturalism and psychologism into poetry . . . It marks the rebirth of style in the theatre . . . Since Musset, no French author had approached the stage with as much ease or grace.<sup>21</sup>

*Siegfried* had a long run, and the extent of its popularity pleasantly surprised both Jouvet and Giraudoux. The author wrote:

I have been surprised by the suddenness of the success and was far from expecting it. They tell me I have gifts as a playwright. I should like to believe it, but am quite astonished by it. When I listen to my play being performed, I find it quite different than it was when I conceived it. I do not recognize it. It has suddenly been transformed before my eyes on the stage.

With the production of *Siegfried*, Jouvet's most strenuous season drew to a close, and his friends urged him to take a long vacation. He complied; and while in the Massif Central, conscientious as usual, he wrote Lucien Aguetand, his technical assistant, asking him once again to test and check the lighting, sound effects, sets, and other matters.

I would have liked to ask you to gather some material for Giraudoux's play concerning sound effects in the movies. I believe I shall give up the procedure which you outlined, about which I have made inquiries, even though Dullin, Baty, and Gémier have adopted this new procedure. I would especially like to be informed about the appliances which produce sound effects, in the film archives. Try to get acquainted with one or two sound-effect men—it seems that there are some remarkable ones.

I would like to get permission from Nureback to try out an electric thunder-making machine. Would you like to inquire about this for me.

I am also supposed to work with Jaccopozzi on lighting effects.<sup>23</sup>

His vacation ended, he returned to Paris and again plunged into work. He planned to produce new plays and revive old ones; he also made preparations for a very brief tour to Geneva where he would play *Siegfried* from September 1st to the 4th.

In Paris, Jouvet again produced *Siegfried* while rehearsing a new three-act play, *Suzanne*, by a promising young author, Stéphane Passeur. Passeur liked to create highly emotional characters and place them in situations which would upset their

normal routine and challenge their deeply ingrained moral convictions. The plot of *Suzanne* followed this pattern. It told the story of a sadistic industrialist Duvernoy (Renoir) who coveted his secretary Suzanne (Tessier). Cretai (Jouvet) was Suzanne's lover and presented a type which Passeur was fond of creating, a hero without heroism. He was a compound of charm, cynicism, and sentimentality. He tried to appear unemotional; even when provoked to anger, he affected an air of nonchalance. He was amusing at times; but under strong pressure, his emotions came violently to the fore. Jouvet stamped this contradictory character with intense reality.<sup>24</sup> The audience enjoyed Jouvet's performance—his revealing silences, his pouting responses, his clear and significant gestures, and his adroitness (he skillfully caught a piece of cake thrown at him).

Although most of the critics enjoyed *Suzanne*, Maurice Martin du Gard, on the other hand, thought that Passeur did not fully understand feminine psychology and that his excessive simplification of the feminine mind detracted from the authenticity of the characterization.<sup>25</sup>

After the close of this play, Jouvet felt that he needed another vacation. From the Haute-Savoie, where he was staying, he wrote Sarment a letter, unusual in that it was the first written expression of his melancholia and dread of old age, which were to plague him to the end of his life.

Do you see what I am exposed to? What chapping? You really must come here one of these days! How beautiful Christmas must be here.

I think I am feeling better—Poincaré also—I am returning in ten days.

There has been a terrible fog here for the past two days. We are in the clouds and I am taking advantage of it "to reflect a bit." It is very painful but I comfort myself with the thought that it is raining on those down below. The sky is cotton-colored and I recall "Lost in the Fog," but this does not make me any younger. Profit from this my good friend and your beautiful wife—when you are my age—finished are the gingerbread pigs and the clay pipes of the shooting gallery. And besides, that roulette game which we play ends by tiring us, and we want to sit down. Come, let me embrace you—remember me to Margo and believe that I am your friend.<sup>26</sup>



Jouvet was only forty-one when these recurrent spells of melancholy took hold of him. He was obsessed with a sense of futility and fear. Strangely enough it was at a time when he was beginning to make his greatest contributions to the stage.

It might be that the absence of friends, for whom he had a constant need, created a void, inviting the eruption of the deeper fears that had always lurked beneath the surface. Jouvet could never completely yield himself to others, but had wanted others to express their affection for and confidence in him. This may have been due to a compelling desire to penetrate the masks of people, to penetrate their secrets the more fully to understand them. It was one of his most strongly held convictions that an actor could not authentically portray a character without having experienced emotions similar to the character's either directly or vicariously through his friends. But, above and beyond all this, there is no doubt that Jouvet deeply loved people and had an emotional need of them. The highly sensitive actor had an affectionate and understanding nature, and he responded sympathetically to the call of both friend and stranger. In a letter to Lucien Aguetand in 1923, the warm and loyal side of the man stands revealed.

I would be happy in the meantime if I could feel that you trusted me more than you do—feel sufficiently confident to confide in me. Be certain that you will not find a more understanding, a more trustworthy and more faithful friend than I.<sup>27</sup>

Later in life, when Jouvet was to sustain some hard blows from those he had believed his friends, he was all the more hurt because he felt that his trust and affection had been misplaced or betrayed.

A few days after Jouvet returned to Paris, he once again set out on another brief tour, arriving at Nice on March 22 and performing the widely acclaimed *Siegfried* for six days. Upon the troupe's return to Paris, Jouvet undertook the production of a new play, Marcel Achard's *Jean de la Lune*.

Jouvet was not satisfied with the script in its original form. As usual, he began tinkering with it. This did not end even after the play had gone into performance. Indeed, as has been already remarked, he often made changes in the script during the course of the run. He found fault with the characterization of Jef, the principal role, which he was to play; it had not been made sufficiently clear and consistent. Moreover, the play was too loosely constructed.<sup>28</sup>

Jef was a dreamer and idealist whose blind faith in the woman he loved, Marceline (Tessier), was such that he overlooked, or was unaware of, her infidelities. But in the end he saw his idealistic philosophy of life triumph over her importunities. *Jean de la Lune* had several points of interest, one being the author's firm grasp of human psychology. Particularly sound and striking was the character of Jef as Jouvet interpreted him. He became the very image of a tender, delicate, and sympathetic soul, seemingly devoid of coarser stuff common to other men. But, on the other hand, he suffered from the defects of his virtues: he was naïve, credulous, blindly affectionate. He was a puzzle. In the Middle Ages, or in Bunyan's England, Jef might have been assumed to be an allegorical figure with few or no complexities of character. But today audiences are sophisticated, and so Jef seems complex, indeed somewhat contradictory and perhaps not as innocent of the world as he pretends to be. This combination of contradictory qualities invited speculation about his actual character. Some critics were inclined to believe that his credulity was affected; others held his naïveté suspect since no one of flesh and blood could possibly continue to believe in his wife's innocence after she herself had confessed her infidelities to him.<sup>29</sup>

Fortunat Strowski, however, wrote that Jouvet, performing with great psychological insight, had expressed "excellently . . . all the ineffable kindness and ingeniousness" of the character.<sup>30</sup> Strowski pointed out something others had seemingly

overlooked—the fact that Jouvet's face became overcast when for one fleeting moment his glance concentrated on Marceline. This was very significant, and indicated to Strowski that Jef might really have understood his wife's character, but had decided to conceal his knowledge of it from her for fear of her displeasure. Many questioned this interpretation, for, if this were so, why, after she had confessed her infidelities, should he strive to maintain this secrecy? The whole affair had come into the open. Furthermore, some inquired at what point Jef had begun to understand her. To which the critic answered: Perhaps from the very beginning, and certainly during the scene between Marceline and her lover Richard (Act I, scene v). The critic contended that Jef's tenderness and forbearance, permitting him to love Marceline without jealousy, were intrinsic in his character and not indications of weakness or hypocrisy. His acceptance of her, with due allowances for her faults, endowed him with sufficient moral power finally to bring Marceline under his influence; and so, in the end, he had, by his understanding and sympathy, either awakened unsuspected virtues in her, or in a way reformed her.

But, whether or not the character of Jef was suspect, there is no doubt that Jouvet got the best out of his part.<sup>31</sup> Rey said that although Jouvet was psychologically unsuited for a role of a naïve dreamer, "he gets him accepted as is."<sup>32</sup> Pierre Brisson wrote that Jouvet's interpretation had much to do with this sense of ambiguity.

With his sharp looks, his measured gestures, and that bearing at once precise and anxious which characterizes his talent, Jouvet remains as far as possible from the Jean de la Lune of the happy dreams, poet of an imaginary Columbine.

While *Jean de la Lune* was still running, Jouvet was in the midst of preparations for a new production. Still, he found time for some political maneuvering; he took an active part in furthering Copeau's candidacy for the directorship of the Comédie-Française. The House of Molière was once again

experiencing one of its characteristic financial and moral crises. Jovet, together with many of France's foremost intellectuals, thought that a new director, a director of force and ability, should be appointed to restore it to its former prestige.

On October 19, 1929, a letter addressed to the Minister of Education attracted considerable attention among the actors and directors of Paris.<sup>34</sup> It described the acuteness of the Comédie-Française's financial plight and suggested the appointment of Copeau to the directorship.<sup>35</sup>

Although Jovet favored Copeau's appointment, it did not follow that he found Emile Fabre, the present director, objectionable. Furthermore, Jovet qualified his opinion of Copeau by saying that he might not possess sufficient versatility to produce a certain type of play which was part of the permanent repertory of the House of Molière. These plays, in effect, were mediocre, but nonetheless had to continue to be staged.

I say that it is a mistake for the Théâtre Français to entrust to a man like Copeau the talent of a Mr. So-and-so for example, or the revival of *Père Lebonnard*. I do not want to indulge in personalities, but I really do not see Copeau reviving *Gringoire*, defending Hervieu's or the Priest Constantin's plays, restaging *Le Baiser* by Théodore Banville, *Le Passant* or *Le Luthier de Crémone*. I say, strictly speaking, that it is mistake. But I add: it is a necessary mistake.<sup>36</sup>

Jovet, though qualifying his admiration for Copeau, was one of his staunchest supporters. However, all of these combined efforts failed in face of other forces at work opposing Copeau. For one, the old guard was frightened at the prospect of having a man of advanced ideas at their head; secondly, the *Sociétaires* of the Comédie-Française feared that their careers might be jeopardized by a man of independent judgment and exacting standards. Together, these two groups pulled strings to thwart Copeau's appointment.<sup>37</sup>

During this dispute, Jovet was again collaborating with Giraudoux, this time on the production of *Amphitryon 38*. The men had by now become devoted friends, and they found

great stimulation in working together. As Giraudoux said:

Furthermore, there was never anything more than a contract between Jouvet and myself, one which excludes mutual felicitations—except at failures, and which replaces reciprocal praise by specialized collaboration, the affection of fellow workers, and the devotion that this theatrical artisanship brings on, which has become, as the operetta says, my passion and my joy.<sup>38</sup>

Many plays had been written on the story of Amphitryon. Among Giraudoux's most illustrious predecessors were Plautus, Molière, and Dryden. Giraudoux's version, however, was highly original. He raised his heroine Alcmène (Tessier) to a position of first importance, while all the other characters revolved about her—Mercury (Jouvet), Jupiter (Renoir), Amphitryon (Allain-Dhurtal) and Sosie (Bouquet).<sup>39</sup> According to Jouvet,

*Siegfried* is a drama, *Amphitryon 38* is a divertissement. In *Siegfried* everyday people become the prey of events, grow, personify their native lands, become heroes. In *Amphitryon 38* a contrary movement—divine characters come down to earth and become human.<sup>40</sup>

As usual, Giraudoux rewrote parts of the play in conformity with Jouvet's suggestions. These changes may sometimes seem minor, but they contribute, in one way or another, to the effectiveness of the text. They are interesting to students of drama for they demonstrate how a play is brought into final shape, how scenes are integrated, how by subtle changes in the dialogue characters can be brought into bolder relief, and especially how the *moment dramatique* is built up. Jouvet aimed to achieve the right pitch in all the elements of the drama to establish authenticity. Giraudoux presented Jouvet with the raw material and with the latter's help and advice, molded it into an excellent vehicle for the troupe. Giraudoux once stated:

It happens that it is Jouvet's doing, and, like those Japanese cut-outs which are nothing but paper, I who thought I was nothing but paper sometimes become a chrysanthemum in the Jouvet swimming pool and sometimes a gladiolus, and am not forbidden from envisaging my blossoming into a lily or a rose in the near future.<sup>41</sup>

Giraudoux, an extremely modest and self-effacing man, was

never to forget his debt to Jouvet. He gave expression to it many times.

Jouvet struck a happy compromise between Greek architecture and modern cubism in the creation of the sets. Act I took place in Amphitryon's palace, which overlooked the city of Thebes. In the center was a terrace, a platformlike structure, with two steps in front. On either side of it hung long drapes. Colorful lighting effects served to brighten the grayish tones of the scene. Act II opened on Alcmène's bedroom, with a simple, classical, Grecian-type bed. The drapes on the windows emphasized the straight lines of the set.

Opinions were divided about the appropriateness of these sets, as well as about Jouvet's acting. Etienne Rey stressed their rigidity, conventionality, and total lack of originality. But he liked the charming interplay of colored lights on the décor. André Rouveyre took the opposite point of view, affirming that the sets were the only points of interest in the production. He called the text "unreadable because of his inclination to borrow, because of his compressed multiplicity and assiduously labored effects of rhetoric, of which, it seems, the author drew up a catalogue."<sup>42</sup> Edmond Sée wrote that the first two acts were exquisitely performed, with grace, charm, and tact, but that the third act lacked distinction.<sup>43</sup>

In *Amphitryon 38*, Jouvet played the free and unconstrained Mercury. In his next production, *Le Prof d'Anglais* by Régis Gignoux, he played a completely different type, that of an English professor, M. Valfine, whose interest in Shakespeare was almost obsessive. M. Valfine compared whatever happened to him with some similar incident in one of Shakespeare's plays. He called Suzanne and Pascal who took English lessons from him, Juliet and Romeo. This passion for Shakespearian nomenclature initiated a comedy of errors; identities were confused because the Shakespearian names given friends and acquaintances were frequently forgotten, and, in consequence, a series of amusing contretemps followed. Valfine

himself forgot whether his beautiful wife was Titania or Desdemona and whether he himself was Valfine, Othello, or Iago, or some nameless musician on an enchanted isle.<sup>44</sup>

Gérard d'Houville wrote that all of Paris should go to see this actor "a distracted lock of hair, dressed in a harum-scarum sort of way (looking like the devil) in an odd-looking suit, his nose aquiver and his eyes always elsewhere."<sup>45</sup> Jouvet's performance drew enthusiastic comments from the critic Henri Bidou.<sup>46</sup> When Jouvet appeared on the stage dressed in an old jacket, baggy trousers, torn stockings, and crumpled hat, he drew guffaws from the audience. He wore little make-up, creating the role *à sec*. Never before had he brought such precision and comprehensive grasp to a role, manipulating all of its foibles with the greatest skill.<sup>47</sup>

The sets were both imaginative and fresh, as Pierre Brisson remarked.<sup>48</sup> The play opened on a view of the Normandy seashore (Act I), but the audience saw neither sand nor ocean, merely a garden with rustic chairs and tables. The stage was bright with a penetrating glare.<sup>49</sup> Act II, Mme Valfine's hotel room, was rather commonplace in effect. But Act III was fanciful and charming. Opening on a small terrace of the villa, the set contained a large barred window in the rear of the set, plants on a sill and a bench directly in front of it. On a bench stood Valfine's fishing basket, a straw hat, and an inverted flower pot. Leaning against the wall and scattered about, in studied disorder, were whips, bottles, baskets, an old screen, and garden utensils.

Jouvet was highly pleased with the success of *Le Prof d'Anglais*. And with a relatively light heart, in the spring of the same year, he went on vacation to a place of high altitudes, glaciers, and invigorating air. But Jouvet never could relax completely; he spent much time making sketches of the sets intended for his next production, Jules Romains' *Donogoo-Tonka*. His talent as an artist (it must not be forgotten that he studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts) stood him in good stead

in sketching his sets and contributed to his self-sufficiency as a director.<sup>50</sup>

On his return to Paris in the fall, he was offered the directorship of the Théâtre Pigalle. Having already undertaken too many commitments, he was obliged to refuse, but he agreed to direct several plays of his own choice for this theatre, Romain's *Donogoo-Tonka*, Giraudoux's *Judith*, and Savoir's *La Pâtissière du Village*.

Just as he was about to start rehearsals for *Donogoo-Tonka*, Jovet received word that his mother was dying. On August 18, he rushed to her bedside in Brittany and almost three weeks later, on September 6, she passed away. The death of his mother haunted him and deepened his fear of death, an obsession which was to take a stronger hold on him as time went on.<sup>51</sup>

Once in Paris, however, his activities reassumed their characteristic pace. The Théâtre Pigalle, where he was to produce *Donogoo-Tonka*, had been built by the Baron de Rothschild. It was furnished with four elevators, an immense switchboard, and a vast amount of complicated theatrical machinery. The theatre had been planned by engineers who had proceeded without consulting artists or specialized architects, and it was therefore in many ways theatrically impractical. No director, thus far, had succeeded in making it profitable.<sup>52</sup> But Jovet accepted the challenge.

*Donogoo-Tonka* had twenty-four changes of scene and it played for four hours. The cast was very large, consisting of more than one hundred characters, and the scenes hopped from place to place—Paris, Brazil, and Donogoo, the town which Professor Le Trouhadec and his friends had founded. Many doubted that Jovet could cope with such an ambitious enterprise. Jovet, Romain, Ibert (the composer of the play's ingenious music), and Colin, who designed the sets, spent more than five months preparing the new production.<sup>53</sup>

The production was interesting for some of the novelties



it introduced. For one, the curtains remained parted during the first part of the play. During that interval, scenes were shifted unmasking the steel machinery, while workmen were seen hurrying around and the stage itself move backwards.<sup>54</sup> Another unusual device was employed to give the illusion of people all over the world reading about and discussing the newly founded city of Donogoo; transparent screens were placed one behind the other, and behind them stood a blue cyclorama. The screens moved sidewise and each scene faded into the next. The cities were suggested by paintings on the screens—a harbor for Marseille, an automat for San Francisco, and a steep gable for Amsterdam.<sup>55</sup>

*Donogoo-Tonka* satirized modern business practices just as *Knock* had derided evil practices in medicine. Despite its complexities, the play was successful.<sup>56</sup> Robert de Beauplan wrote that the various elements in the production “were performed with perfect mastery” and that Jouvet had given a fine sense of reality and continuity to the ensemble.<sup>57</sup>

The play marked the end of another successful year in Paris, and Jouvet informed reporters that this company would tour Europe for two months.<sup>58</sup> Italy, France, Belgium, and Switzerland were included in the itinerary, with *Knock*, *Amphitryon 38*, *Le Prof d'Anglais*, *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, and *Le Carrosse du Saint-Sacrement* as the repertory.<sup>59</sup>

The tour was a triumph. Parisian newspapers reprinted the enthusiastic comments of drama critics in every city visited. The manager of the Célestins Théâtre in Lyon said that Jouvet and his troupe had given his theatre “the most successful week of the year.”<sup>59</sup> Marseille, so dreaded by touring theatrical companies because of the severity of the critics and the unruliness of its audiences, gave Giraudoux’s play an unexpectedly warm reception, and two extra performances of *Amphitryon 38* were required at Nice during the Carnival season. In Rome, critics were unanimous in their praise, though some observed that Jouvet’s voice was sometimes unpleasant and

that his face was not sufficiently mobile for his efforts; but many added that he overcame these defects by the sheer force of his authority, his penetrating intelligence, and the prodigious knowledge of his art.<sup>60</sup> In Italy, *Amphitryon 38* was the most successful play, but it elicited some odd comments by the critics. A few thought it an antireligious tract; others that it was the product of post-war fatigue; still others considered it a parody on war.<sup>61</sup> In Geneva, the troupe was once more acclaimed, and the acting and stage sets were singled out for special commendation.<sup>62</sup> In Belgium, similar enthusiasm was aroused. One critic in Brussels remarked that he attributed Jouvét's success to the mystic bond among the members of the cast, author, director, and audience.<sup>63</sup>

Jouvét was heartened by the warmth of his reception everywhere. He found delightful the intimate and leisurely attitude of Italian audiences toward their theatre.<sup>64</sup> The play rarely started until the theatre had been filled; yet, without complaining the people in the audience whiled away the time chatting with one another. The theatre for the Italians, wrote Jouvét, was an "element of society which has disappeared from our Parisian theatres."<sup>65</sup> He praised the wise and scholarly manner with which the Italian critics reviewed the plays.<sup>66</sup>

On his return to Paris, Jouvét at once launched into the production of Drieu La Rochelle's *L'Eau Fraîche* at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées.<sup>67</sup> The play turned out to be banal and hardly worth the effort. Yet, in playing Thomas, the cynical friend of the family, Jouvét used all his skill in an attempt to bring the play to life. Maurice Martin du Gard considered his efforts valiant, but not sufficient to overcome the play's inherent weaknesses.<sup>68</sup>

*Un Taciturne*, a psychological drama by Roger Martin du Gard, was Jouvét's next production. This probing drama tells the story of a man who, unknowingly, suffers from a sexual inversion. It is interesting to compare the handling of a subject held more or less taboo by nineteenth-century authors

with its handling by authors of the twentieth century. Balzac, for example, described Vautrin's inclinations toward Rastignac and Lucien de Rubempré in a most subtle and veiled manner. Today the problem of the homosexual is approached clinically by novelists and is discussed freely at dinner tables. Roger Martin du Gard, author of the play, was tolerant of and almost indulgent toward the homosexual.<sup>69</sup>

In many seventeenth-century plays, and even more so in many of the nineteenth-century plays, there is a *raisonneur* who takes an objective attitude toward the involvements of the characters, and represents common sense. Armand was the *raisonneur* in *Un Taciturne*. But Armand was modern. He had read Freud, and he constantly analyzed his own motives as well as the motives of others; moreover, he rarely hesitated to speak his mind, even of what he said was unpalatable or painful. This made of him, he thought, a strong man who stood above the weaknesses of his society; in short, he considered himself intellectually superior and perspicacious.<sup>70</sup>

Jouvet, as Armand, used little make-up; his face was wonderfully expressive, and his intonations richly varied. His glances hardened in a cruelly penetrating expression whenever he set out, with a streak of sadism, to make his victims wince with unwelcome truths about themselves.<sup>71</sup> When Jouvet-Armand watched his friend Thierry (who had just realized he was a homosexual), he remained unmoved, taking an aloof clinical attitude toward perversion.

The critics were almost unanimous in their praise of Jouvet's acting. Maurice Martin du Gard wrote that Jouvet had "played to perfection."<sup>72</sup> Maurice Rostand called his portrayal inimitable.<sup>73</sup>

According to André Gide, however, Roger Martin du Gard felt that the basic meaning of the play was not understood by either Renoir or Jouvet. As Gide noted in his *Journal*,

Roger complains of not being able to find a young actor who is sufficiently attractive physically. X, who offers himself for the role, is

intelligent and charming; but, says Roger: "No one in the audience will ever have a desire to kiss him on the mouth." The secret motive of the play, moreover, seems completely incomprehensible to Jouvét and to Renoir. Not the slightest tremor, not the slightest warmth. If sensuality does not enter in, the pistol shot at the end has no justification.<sup>74</sup>

Other critics disagreed. Pierre Lièvre considered the performance so fine that he thought Roger Martin du Gard had written the play with Jouvét's troupe in mind.<sup>75</sup> Etienne Rey remarked that Jouvét's direction was "the model of what theatrical directing should be."<sup>76</sup>

Such favorable criticisms bolstered Jouvét's self-confidence, and though he was still inclined to a state of nerves before first nights, he was now convinced that both audiences and critics were behind him in his efforts and had faith in his judgment.<sup>77</sup> Instead of becoming complacent over his success, however, and exploiting it, Jouvét again showed his quality and the breadth of his sympathy. He turned away from his own success at this point to tackle problems of the theatre which concerned every worker in it. He was still one of the workers, no matter how renowned. As such, he spoke out.

To Jouvét's mind, the theatre still suffered from very definite evils produced by three specific causes—poor business management, competition from motion pictures, and a lack of esprit de corps. Lacking a sense of unity, the playwrights, directors, actors, and technicians all pursued their individual ends irrespective of common interests. Here was the root of the evil.

Legislation had been passed to relieve this condition, but it was piecemeal and not integrated—the football of politics. In the end the cure was worse than the disease. Moreover, a formidable number of individual organizations had arisen to deal with this situation.<sup>78</sup> Each agency pursued its own interests—actor's, stage hands', or playwrights'—with complete disregard for the intentions of other departments of the theatre. These organizations even worked against each other or feuded with one another. Measures adopted by one group

might turn out to be harmful to the rest. Jouvet commented that although this ruinous decentralization prevailed not only in the theatre, but also in all fields of endeavor, the theatre suffered most, for it had become "a mushrooming of trade associations."<sup>79</sup> At this point, he asked a highly pertinent question: Why, for practical purposes, did not these organizations unite and serve a common purpose?

Jouvet himself could not tell how such unity might be achieved, what cohesive force could bring these diverse and sometimes warring elements together. He did not offer a panacea which would banish all the evils that beset the theatre, since he was not a specialist in social relations, nor did he possess "the wisdom to find a solution for the present-day insolvency."<sup>80</sup> He did, however, suggest partial state aid, as he had done previously.

A second and weightier obstacle to the financial stability of the contemporary French theatre was the competition of the movie industry. The large and prosperous movie companies easily lured actors and actresses from the legitimate stage with the temptation of higher pay. The movie companies also had sufficient financial resources to lure away the experienced scenic designers, mechanics, and electricians, and by so doing, had impoverished the stage. They transplanted techniques of the stage to the movie sets, and directed the actors like automata, with the result that the standards of acting were lowered, and lazy and indifferent habits encouraged. The cinema had taken everything from the theatre except its fundamental disciplines and the traditional great art of the actors. Jouvet concluded by saying that if a fair and equitable collaboration could be established between the theatre and the movies, a mutually profitable and advantageous relationship would come about. But to achieve this end would require an open mind and a generous spirit on the part of all concerned.<sup>81</sup>

During the winter of 1931 Jouvet spent most of his time between the Comédie des Champs-Élysées and the Théâtre

Pigalle. For an actor, he was a man of astonishingly regular habits. He would arrive at the Théâtre Pigalle at eight in the morning to attend to business matters. At eleven, he was at his own theatre again devoting himself to business. He lunched late, and afterwards supervised rehearsals, one day at his own theatre, the next at the Théâtre Pigalle. Between six and eight in the evening he would direct rehearsals at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées. After that, he would dine and perform in *Knock*. At the end of the performance he would spend several hours with his cast discussing *Knock* or *Judith*, which he was directing at the Théâtre Pigalle. *Judith* was scheduled to open on November 5, 1931.<sup>82</sup>

Before writing *Judith*, Giraudoux had preferred not to re-read the Biblical story, trusting his childhood impressions to create the appropriate atmosphere. He felt that this permitted him a greater sense of freedom in the creative process. Besides, the play was not intended as a historical document; it was neither ancient nor modern, but belonged to all time. For this reason accurate historical details were not necessary. Only the costumes would place it historically.<sup>83</sup>

The most successful set in this ambitious play was created for Act III by Jouvet and Moulaert. It consisted of a gallery which represented the alcove in front of Holofernes' tent. The sides of the tent were covered with lateral strips, which in effect created the semblance of an avenue. The bright blue sky, the towers, the high walls, and the red earth added more colorful touches to the sets.<sup>84</sup> But many critics found fault with the acting, with the *mise en scène*, with the lighting, and felt that the Théâtre Pigalle, because of its huge size, was not suited to the play. Once again, Jouvet was faced with a dismal failure.

By now he was used to occasional failures and in a sense learned to take them in stride. He never struck back at the critics for their harshness, but sought to discover his own mistakes and profit from them. Had the script or his produc-

tion of it been inadequate? Had the sets perhaps been unsuitable? Often he did not have a minute to pursue the preliminary designs of a set. In such a case he would ask his assistants to complete them for him. Once the blueprints were at hand, Jouvet immediately set out to improve them. He would say:

Well now, let me show you. The room is like this, with a bay window. You can see a little sky, otherwise a window is certainly useless. A bay window. Do you understand. And no bed, for heaven sakes! We are not at the Folies-Bergères. You say that a bed is necessary in the play.<sup>85</sup>

If a bed were called for in the play and Jouvet objected to this prop, he would urge the author by telephone to make the change. Often several scenes had to be altered to permit the elimination of some of the props. Afterwards, Jouvet might decide to restore them, and failing to inform the playwright of his decision, would burden him with a night spent in futile rewriting.<sup>86</sup>

During the next year and a half, Jouvet produced four plays of which only one was to be successful. The first of these was produced at the Théâtre Pigalle and was a three-act play by Jules Romains, *Le Roi Masqué*. The second, Marcel Achard's *Domino*, produced at his own theatre, was highly successful. Alfred Savoir's *La Pâtissière du Village* produced at the Théâtre Pigalle and Alfred Savoir's *La Margrave*, produced at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées were not favorably received. Sometimes by a turn of fate it chanced that Jouvet missed producing a worthwhile successful script. For instance, Marcel Pagnol brought him his new play *Topaze*; then Pagnol, expecting a rejection by Jouvet, sent a copy of it to the Théâtre des Variétés, which promptly accepted it. The embarrassed author now had to withdraw the script from Jouvet, and he blunderingly explained to him that the play would never have suited his theatre anyway. Jouvet saw through his little stratagem but with a straight face returned the script.<sup>87</sup>

In a more subdued and tranquil mood, Jouvet approached

his new production, *Intermezzo*, a three-act play by Giraudoux. The scheme of the play permitted the performer complete freedom of action. He might walk down to the audience or appear unexpectedly anywhere in the theatre, since he was not limited to the stage itself. As Pierre Lièvre remarked:

I find something miraculous in the ability of this intellectual workman to bring to light the as yet undefined charms of a text, to make them bloom by keeping them gently within the confines of dream and hallucination, as the situation requires.<sup>88</sup>

Producing Giraudoux's plays awakened latent powers of insight and creativeness in Jouvet. The décor always presented interesting problems. In *Intermezzo* the sets were severely simplified. The first scene represented a field with a single tree in the background, bordered by bushes and ferns. In Act II there were a small stone bench, a tree, bushes, ferns, and grass. The atmosphere was serene. It was twilight. André Boll called the first act original and ingenious, but found fault with the second which, in his opinion, lacked atmosphere. The critic observed that since the play was of an imaginative and fairy-like nature, the stage should have looked like a fairy forest peopled with nymphs and satyrs, with birds and supernatural creatures.<sup>89</sup> Act III was the most charming set of all. It opened on Isabelle's room, in the rear of which was a balcony with two windows overlooking the small town. During this act the community's philharmonic orchestra could be heard rehearsing. The intricate lighting with rainbow colors, pastel nuances, and iridescences created both broad and subtle effects symbolising the tender and naïve characters of the protagonists. When the Spectre (Renoir), the ghost whom the young Isabelle had conjured up, appeared, Jouvet projected strong lights on either side of him, partially framing him, and thus suggesting his mysterious and ethereal character. At the conclusion of the play, Jouvet gave the order for "full lights." The curtains closed on a dazzlingly bright stage.<sup>90</sup>

The musical accompaniment for *Intermezzo* was written by



Francis Poulenc. His counterpoint underscored episodes in the play and contributed to its dreamy atmosphere.<sup>91</sup> Every time the foolish inspector appeared, Poulenc's accompaniment suggested an ass's bray. In the play's poetic and tender moments, the music fell into a romantic and nostalgic mood. Giraudoux said that Poulenc's music had definitely "created and accompanied the atmosphere."<sup>92</sup>

Jouvet, completely absorbed during this period in his productions, rarely gave thought to what was happening outside his domain. But sometimes he was shocked out of his consecrated routine by incidents which affected him deeply. Such an incident occurred at this time. *The Nouvelles Littéraires* of April 1, 1933, printed an interview with Lugué-Poë. After giving great praise to the directors of the past (his own contemporaries), Lugué-Poë condemned the directors of the present. He asserted that whereas the directors of his time were entirely devoted to their art, without ulterior financial considerations, the modern directors were mercenary. He listed the names of several directors, including that of Jouvet, who were solely concerned with financial gain. These men, Lugué-Poë asserted, used the theatre as an instrument of speculation.<sup>93</sup>

Jouvet was outraged. After all the sacrifices he had made to further the development of the contemporary theatre, he was being told that his productions were nothing but "speculations in the theatrical business." On April 4 he answered this accusation in a letter to the *Nouvelles Littéraires*. Jouvet flatly stated that Lugué-Poë's comparison of today's theatre with that of his time was prejudiced and that he could not permit Lugué-Poë's absurd generalizations to pass unquestioned.

There is everywhere an equipoise of evil, and it is only the knowledge of this fact that can free half of our profession from the scorn of shame which it has for certain ones among us.<sup>94</sup>

Nor was it true that all of the directors in Lugué-Poë's time were as devoted to their art as he claimed, for:

Among the directors of that period, there was a rogue or a vile slanderer—a usurer of talent, a speculator of genius, a filibuster or slave-trader behind the scenes.

Furthermore, Jovet stated that Lugué-Poë must have been in a sentimental and nostalgic mood when he wrote this article, conveniently forgetting the ugly and unpleasant side of the theatre in his time. Materialism then was as prevalent as it is now. Judging from Lugué-Poë's statement, Jovet continued, it would not seem that the high taxes and cinematic competition continued to eat away at his profits. Since 1930, that is, for the past two years, his receipts had decreased 58 percent. It had been a period of depression, to be sure, which hit industry as well as the arts; but industry had greater resources to fall back on and therefore greater powers of recovery. Sometimes the theatre had to live from hand to mouth, so vulnerable was it to any economic fluctuation.<sup>96</sup> During the depression, many of Jovet's fellow actors and actresses were jobless. On the other hand, the Conservatoire and the subsidized theatres could continue producing innocuous and inane plays unaffected by economic pressures.<sup>97</sup> During the season of 1934, of the forty theatres in Paris, only eight had not run at a loss. To add to the director's plight, authors now received 12 percent of the gross receipts earned, and no longer a percentage of the net receipts. Therefore, successful authors could become very wealthy, while the theatre languished.

The depression hit Jovet so hard that he could keep his theatre open only eight months out of the year instead of the usual ten. He was confronted with the prospect of giving up the Comédie des Champs-Élysées because it was too expensive to run.

It is impossible! It is impossible! And I can never think, without becoming indignant, that the vital element of the theatre, the entire troupe, costs us only one fifth of the operating expenses. What overwhelms us is the dead part; what exhausts us is the dead weight.<sup>98</sup>

Jovet's last productions at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées were a revival of *M. Le Trouhadec Saisi par la Débauche*,

a fantasy by Marcel Achard, *Pétrus*, and a four-act play by Jean Cocteau, *La Machine Infernale*.

In *Petrus*, Jouvet once again played the leading role. He was Petrus, the ambulant photographer, who, after having been mistakenly shot at by a chorus girl, Migo (Thérèse Dorny), fell in love with her. Pétrus' abrupt entrance, after having been wounded, produced an irresistibly comic effect. He bounded on the stage, venting his wrath in a high-pitched voice. In a mood of hysterical self-pity, he exhibited his wounded arm, wrapped in a scarf, to those about him and gave vent to another burst of invective. Then, dragging one leg after the other, he walked around the stage, trembling with emotion.<sup>99</sup> Achard, the author, however, felt that Jouvet did not have it in him to create the imbecile type which he had intended. He never really convinced the audience of Pétrus' credulity, and for this reason the play seemed to lack validity. This might account for the short run. Achard also thought that Thérèse Dorny lacked both poetry and conviction as Migo, and so the audience could hardly be interested in her.<sup>100</sup>

Cocteau's *La Machine Infernale* was Jouvet's final production at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées. The drama presented a psychologically complicated Oedipus seen from a Freudian point of view. Cocteau said that in this play the "machine infernale" was an arm of predestination and that the fates had patiently and relentlessly plotted the course of Oedipus' doom from the very day of his birth. The gods tricked him, too, into believing that all his misfortunes were in reality blessings in disguise; they thereby lured him from one misadventure to the next.

This brilliant drama was an outstanding production because of the efforts of three people—Jean Cocteau, Louis Jouvet, and Christian Bérard. Cocteau summed up the situation this way:

Without the inventive genius of Christian Bérard, the courage of Jouvet, and the cast, it would have been impossible for me to put into production four acts which are four distinct plays. I hope that the public will

forgive us the inevitable weaknesses of an undertaking which consists of nothing less than fighting with ghosts.<sup>101</sup>

Christian Bérard designed the sets. What characterized all of his settings as well as his paintings was a most unusual combination of elegance with a powerful dramatic sense. Bérard was an unusual man with a fine mind and a highly sensitive artistic conscience, which made him seek perfection in whatever he undertook, no matter how much time it required.<sup>102</sup> Cocteau introduced him to Jouvet in 1933. From then on, Bérard frequently collaborated with Jouvet.<sup>103</sup> Jouvet admired his excellent taste and judgment in artistic and theatrical matters. He wrote of him:

When I look at him from the orchestra, with his mossy and muddy beard, like the god of the Rhone, meandering toward the stage, following the lights, which he passes, he resembles Nero, Catullus, Mounet-Sully, a head of Phidias, of a tramp. It is the god Proteus himself, the real sea-god Proteus.<sup>104</sup>

For *La Machine Infernale*, Cocteau, Bérard, and Jouvet believed that simplicity would have to be the keynote of the sets. They would avoid the pitfalls of both detailed realism and abstractionism. There was one interesting innovation in the sets: a small stage, approximately 13 ft. by 13 ft., stood in the center of the forestage, enclosed by a pale blue hanging, and illuminated by a single mercury lamp.

Bérard did away with the usual friezes and classic props characteristic of the sets of such plays, and used an azure blue background which gave the stage a refreshing sense of spaciousness and perspective. The columns, rocks, and edifices in the foreground were three dimensional, not of the *trompe l'oeil* type. The dominant colors were white, gray, brown, and tan.

In Act II, Oedipus is on the road leading to Thebes. Confronting him, there is a wall, a ruin, a rock, and the jackal-headed god Anubis. In Act III, on Oedipus' wedding night, the cradle in which Oedipus had slept as an infant stands next to the marriage bed. The room is draped in red cloth which,

under the lights shining on it with varying intensities, changes from vermilion to reddish brown.<sup>105</sup>

The costumes were brilliant, with flashing polychromatic effects. The intensity of color in the costuming was proportionate to the importance of the historical figure. Bérard's use of color tonality gave the eye the same sort of pleasure that a piece of fine music skilfully played gives the ear. Pierre Brisson wrote that "all the images create striking pictures."<sup>106</sup>

Jouvet played the shepherd of Laius, a relatively minor role. His contribution lay in the directing. Although *La Machine Infernale* was aesthetically one of the most satisfying plays that had been produced for many years, it failed to take hold, and ran for only sixty-four nights. Pierre Lièvre observed that few people were sufficiently sensitive to appreciate the production. However, the play possessed "all possible lures which can act upon curious and sensitive minds."

During the run of the play, Jouvet had definitely decided to give up the Comédie des Champs-Élysées, and began looking for another theatre, less expensive and more suitable for his needs. Many of his friends urged him to remain at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées, convinced that the financial situation would improve. Jouvet replied, "An improvement . . . it is not even a question of that."<sup>107</sup> Even if all of the 800 seats at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées were occupied during every performance (and this did not often happen), the gross profit would still be meagre. One third of the profit (or 5,000 francs) would go into taxes; the rental would absorb 2,000 francs, and the remaining 8,000 francs would go toward the salaries of actors, mechanics, and stage hands. Thus "from the point of view of the management, the 'theatrical business' does not resemble any other."<sup>108</sup>



# 3

*The Athénée Theatre*





## *The Great Period*

### *1934-1939*

*To stage a play, in short, is to assist its author, to give him a total, a blind devotion, which will make his work beloved without reservations.<sup>1</sup>*

After the curtain fell on the last performance of Cocteau's *La Machine Infernale*, Jouvet terminated his relations with the Comédie des Champs-Élysées and assumed his new functions as Director of the Athénée Theatre.<sup>2</sup>

The Comédie des Champs-Élysées had been, for various reasons, a difficult theatre to run. The theatre was situated on the fourth floor of the building, to which the sets for new plays had to be moved, with great effort and expense, from the ground floor. The cost of both heating and lighting such a large building was heavy. Moreover, the Comédie des Champs-Élysées had been conceived with the idea of attracting an intellectually elite clientele, instead of the masses, and its limited audiences undoubtedly were a basic cause of its financial difficulties. The Athénée Theatre at 24 Rue Caumartin, on the contrary, was conceived from a practical point of view. It

stood near the boulevards. The stage was on the ground floor. The theatre was compact.

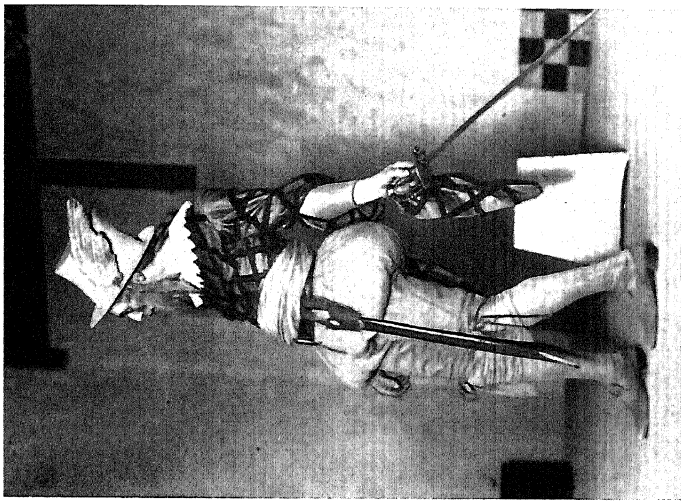
In this new position, Jouvet had no intention of changing his repertoire or his cast. As he wrote, he would continue to strive to achieve the highest artistic standards.

I intend to make the authors loved whom I have undertaken to uphold until now, and those I shall discover in the future. My cast, my collaborators, and myself shall emigrate, but we shall take with us, intact, our hopes, our enthusiasms, and the desire to continue the mission for which we have fought for such a long time.<sup>3</sup>

During the months of August and September of 1934, Jouvet was busy planning the physical alterations of the Athénée. Under his guidance, the stage was rebuilt, the old electrical fixtures rewired, and the electrical power increased to permit him to continue to use full lights. A curtain of red velvet with gold tassels and fringes was designed by Deshayes. Domergue painted the forestage curtain with an allegoric springtime theme. The seats were reinforced and given the sheen of newness. In the repainted corridors, Paul Prouté hung a permanent exhibition of engravings.<sup>4</sup> Finally the Athénée Theatre was brought completely up to date with a loudspeaker intercommunication system.<sup>5</sup>

Jouvet opened the new season with a revival of Giraudoux's *Ampitryon 38*. He had rehearsed his cast thoroughly as usual, from August 28 to September 15 at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées, and from September 15 to the opening on October 8 at the Athénée. The critics were unanimous in their praise of the production, a good omen for Jouvet's future at this theatre.<sup>6</sup>

*Tessa*, an adaptation by Giraudoux of *The Constant Nymph*, was his next production. Jouvet always looked forward with excitement to the production of a new play by Giraudoux. In 1934 Jouvet chanced to read Margaret Kennedy's<sup>7</sup> popular novel and was so impressed by it that he suggested that Giraudoux adapt it for the French stage. Giraudoux, who had just refused Barnowski's request to adapt a Shakespearean



As Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Les Nuit des Rois* (Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*)  
As Tom Prior in *Outward Bound* by Sutton Vane



Photos Lipitzki



Photos Lipnitzki

Jouvet in one of his most famous roles—Doctor Knock, and, in costume for *Knock*, with Jules Romain, the play's author

Christian Bérard, a great modern stage designer and his set for Act II of *La Folle de Chaillot*

Photos Lippitzki

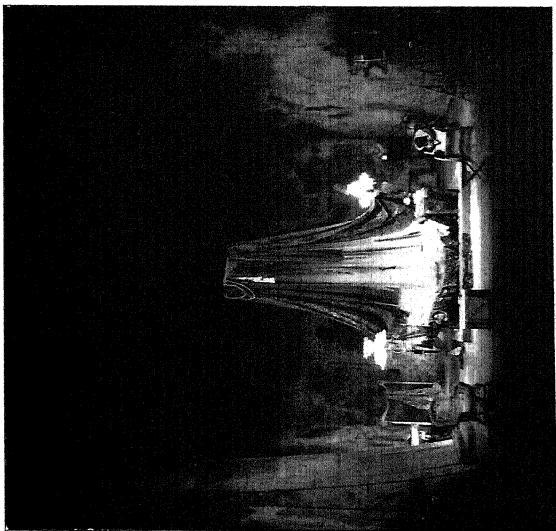




Photo Lipnitzki

Jovet in Molière's *Dom Juan* (with the statue of The Commander)

play, considering Shakespeare inviolable, welcomed Jouvét's suggestion. But, instead of an adaptation, Giradoux created an original work in which he expressed his most sensitive and philosophical ideas.

*Tessa* tells the story of a girl and her family, the Sangers, and her ultimate realization that, for one not physically strong, love can be a burden too heavy and joyful to endure. The Sangers have five girls and a boy, and devote their lives to music while living a free life in the Tyrol. There is also Lewis Dodd, whom the Sanger children adore. *Tessa* (Madeleine Ozeray), a loveable creature who feels accountable only to herself, is a delicate and ethereal type of person. After her father's death, *Tessa* joins Lewis Dodd and his newly married wife, Florence, in England. It is not long before Lewis, grown weary of his wife's constraint and narrow views, finds *Tessa* a source of delight and understanding and flees with her to Belgium. But *Tessa*, always in delicate health, finds her love for Lewis too burdensome for her heart to support and soon dies in the Belgian pension in which she and Lewis had sought refuge.

Jouvét created a remarkable Lewis Dodd in gray pullover and trousers.<sup>8</sup> He brought out the Bohemian side of one who, at the age of sixteen, had fled his morally strict and well-to-do family to take up the life of a wanderer. In his love affair with *Tessa* he revealed a highly sensitive nature, but was often unpredictable in his emotions and behavior.

*Tessa* was a tremendous success and according to Maurice Martin du Gard this was due to the fact that Jouvét was a "fully matured genius."<sup>9</sup>

On October 12, 1934, the directors of the Conservatoire met to decide on the successors for several retiring professors. Jouvét's name was mentioned. When his friends called to congratulate him on this new honor, he suggested that they postpone their felicitations until the election was made official. He said:

I will, of course, be happy and very proud to succeed Leitner on Rue de Madrid. It is more than a pleasure and more than an honor for a *metteur en scène* to be tendered the mission of awakening young talents and to awaken them while there is still time. To teach the art of the actor, is, indeed, to my way of thinking, not only to teach the more or less gifted young people, the technique of a profession, infinitely more difficult than one is pleased to imagine, but especially to discern the aptitudes of these young men . . . and that, at once. One sees, alas, too frequently, artists, great artists, finding themselves at fifty, seeing clearly within themselves, discovering their true usefulness.<sup>10</sup>

Jouvet was officially elected a professor on October 12, 1934, a signal honor for him, and also quite an ironical turn of fate, since he had been refused admission as a student at the Conservatoire.<sup>11</sup>

Jouvet believed that the role of the teacher was to help release the authentic personality of young actors. They had first, of course, to learn how to breathe, to walk, to talk properly, and to dance, but paramount was the necessity of learning to know themselves, to discover their true aptitudes by experience and trial and error. In short, they had to discover their genuine talents and express them in terms of the theatre. The difference between true and false acting talent is similar to the difference between poetry and rhetoric; rhetoric, as Yeats said, comes from the will, poetry from the heart. Above all, said Jouvet, it is important not to "allow his soul of the *comédien* to be misled."<sup>12</sup>

Jouvet, as professor at the Conservatoire, was to concern himself with the development of individual personalities.<sup>13</sup> He wrote that nothing can be as capricious as an individual's development and as very few studies had been made at the time of an individual's growth, he was in a sense a pioneer in his efforts to find out at what age a young actor reaches his peak. Citing the case of literary men in this respect, Jouvet remarked that had Balzac been judged by his early efforts, he would have been advised to take up wigmaking.<sup>14</sup>

Every actor, Jouvet told his classes, acquires an individual conception of the character he is about to interpret. But



Jouvet had no confidence in those actors who, after a few rehearsals, thought they had mastered their roles. Such actors were anxious, all too anxious, to solidify their conceptions, with a result that could only be superficial since they had not permitted themselves sufficient time through trial and error to get to the bottom of their characters and truly master them. On the other hand, continued Jouvet, there were passive actors who slowly and vaguely absorbed the text, with the result that the crystallization is incomplete; though their gestures may seem to be right, the characterizations have become in fact loosely held together composites, instead of clearly delineated creations.

He said further that to be fully effective in bringing the student to an understanding of himself, the professor must try to help him see himself as others see him, for only then can the student obtain a just and objective appraisal of himself. This is most difficult to accomplish. A painter, after the completion of a painting, may stand aside from it to judge it objectively, then add whatever is necessary to improve it. The actor cannot do this. He must depend on others for criticism and important correctives until he has reached a high point in his development, that is, a sure awareness of himself, of his abilities, and a keen sense of the stage. To apprehend the actor's problems, to make him understand them, these are the essential abilities necessary for sound teaching.<sup>15</sup>

This was not orthodox teaching, but Jouvet had never been orthodox in his methods. He was a pioneer in many respects and he dared to be bold. He taught that, according to his experience, it would be unwise for him to instruct his students in the well-worn acting techniques then prevailing. This would tend to constrain them and subject them to inflexible formalizing influences. Every student had to learn to evolve his own active techniques by trial and error. Jouvet, in trying to help his pupils achieve this essential knowledge of themselves, used a Socratic method in the classroom; he probed

and questioned, sometimes pointlessly or maliciously. For instance, he would bring a student to the point of casting doubt upon his most recently held convictions. By shaking the student free of facile convictions and by forcing fresh choices upon him, Jouvét would bring him to a knowledge of the rich resources in himself, the complexity and wealth of life, and the many dimensions of the mind. Thus, step by step, the student would come to a fuller understanding of his potentialities.<sup>16</sup>

Jouvét also wanted to know what his students might unwittingly reveal about themselves physically, and so he ventured on a series of experiments. He studied their psychic make-up also, because he wanted to understand the whole man. In these unique experiments he often taught his pupils by surprising and baffling them. They would ask him why he made them play certain roles to which they felt themselves unsuited, not realizing that Jouvét was pursuing a consistent method of putting them into situations which would test their basic physical and mental abilities and their integrity. Under Jouvét's pressure, they would, little by little, rid themselves of acquired bad habits and false conceptions of themselves; for, in general, they had been poorly oriented and were only vaguely aware of what was fundamental in the art of acting and what was authentic in themselves.<sup>17</sup>

Carrying this matter further, he suggested that they learn how to conceal their feelings when expressions of these feelings might intrude upon the parts they were performing. But this, he warned, could be carried too far. He gave an example. One evening, during a performance of *Léopold le Bien Aimé*, Jouvét noticed a small wound on the palm of a fellow actor. When Jouvét asked him how he had been hurt, he said that, as he was lighting his pipe in the third act of the play, the match had burst and fallen into the palm of his hand; but in order to remain in character, he suppressed the pain.<sup>18</sup>

Jouvét also tried to imbue his students with self-confidence.

This is most difficult to accomplish because of the actor's sensitive make-up. He is particularly nervous before the test of the first night, on which so much depends. In time he cloaks himself in superstitions to muffle his fears; like Jouvét himself, he surrounds himself with a hedge of taboos in order to lean on the support of mysterious forces.

From earliest times, the stage has been fertile ground for taboos and superstitions. To fend off the invasion of pessimistic thoughts, actors make many curious, sometimes religious gestures, like knocking on wood. They follow a pattern of behavior filled with superstition before the opening night. The patterns are various, and sometimes take a brutal or aggressive form. A group of actors will sometimes dismiss from among them those unfortunate enough to have won a reputation for bringing bad luck into the theatre. These behavior patterns are age-old and perhaps serve a sound psychological purpose. But the following taboos seem particularly strange: an umbrella must not be opened on stage; no actor may bring a bird in a cage on stage; no mechanic or director may use the word "cord" inside a theatre.<sup>19</sup>

Taboos and superstitions live as lively a life as ever in the theatre. Jouvét himself was bound by them. In his odd and persistent way, he would ask why it is that a theatre with 700 seats is packed for several nights in succession, and then only a scattering for the next few nights? Jouvét believed that neither statistics nor physics could explain this phenomenon. He accounted for it by saying that the theatre itself had a soul, which gradually took form in the atmosphere of the productions given in the theatre.

Jouvét liked to pose other "unanswerable" questions linked to the theatre. Acoustics often cannot be improved, he said, by the sound engineer. Why? Because acoustics have an independent life and can be altered only by a change in the stage sets, or in the quality of the plays produced, or by the number of actors in the troupe. So, he concluded, the theatre

has a "dramatic sonority," with a distinct and individual nature. It enjoys a good or bad health, which depends in large measure on the success or failure of the theatre's repertory.<sup>20</sup>

The theatre also has a jinx, Jouvét said. If a certain undesirable person, a Miss X or Mr. Y, should happen to be in the audience, the play will fail. Jouvét was even prepared to name the jinxes in the audience, whose malign influence foredoom the crystallization of the dramatic mood in a performance. A director may be enthusiastic about a certain play's possibilities after reading it; but in the end may decide not to produce the work because of another director's failure with it. To illustrate this point, Jouvét recalled that he had once told Antoine that he admired Gerhardt Hauptmann's play, *L'Assomption d'Hannele Mattern*, and intended to produce it; whereupon Antoine looked at him pityingly and said:

My friend, you won't make a penny. I loved this play and I tried to stage it ten times; at the Théâtre Antoine during my first administration at the Odéon, and again during my second administration. It never caught on. Don't do it, it's ill-fated.<sup>21</sup>

Jouvét did not produce it.

Jouvét went on to say that good actors can sense the mood of the audience and what it portends. Soon after the beginning of *La Margrave*, both Renoir and Jouvét sensed an ominous mood in the audience that portended the failure of the play. But they never mistook an ominous and oppressive silence, which signified indifference and boredom in the audience, for the hush of subdued excitement.<sup>22</sup>

He then posed a more serious question: Why is Giraudoux successful while others, perhaps equally gifted, are failures? What magic attracts and holds an audience? This power is difficult to analyze; it is inherent in the playwright's genius. Actors who perform in Giraudoux's plays realize this; and they have the satisfaction of knowing just when the audience is caught in the tide of the drama, absorbed in the story. Only great writers have succeeded in creating the dramatic stasis.<sup>23</sup>

To study the details of Jouvet's lectures on the theatre is to see him revealed as a many-sided man whose well thought out ideas must be taken seriously. His fame as a lecturer on things theatrical brought him many offers of lecture engagements. He received the distinction of being invited to make the commemorative address on the fiftieth anniversary of Henri Becque's play, *La Parisienne*. Unorthodox and bold as usual, he plainly announced his distaste for Becque's work in his lecture entitled, "La Disgrace de Becque."<sup>24</sup> This was startling but characteristic of Jouvet's fundamental integrity. He noted that Becque had suffered many misfortunes during his life because of his unpleasant, gruff, and rude personality. These characteristics, he said, were reflected in his plays. There is not one requited love in all of his works; they are devoid of poetry and brutally realistic at all times. Unlike Giraudoux's, Becque's plays lack the inherent joy which derives from the deep understanding between the author and the characters he creates.<sup>25</sup>

Despite Jouvet's distaste for Becque's work, he devoted a great deal of time to preparation for the speech. The result could only be a frosty objectivity. On the other hand, in his articles on Molière and Giraudoux, the reader is struck by the incantatory and poetic character of his prose. But his lecture on Becque, on the contrary, consisted of little more than a series of statistics, devoid of feeling or sympathy for his subject. The document remained lifeless. Jouvet had performed a duty, and perhaps not with very good grace. His portrait of Becque as a man and playwright is too much of a black-and-white affair.

But Jouvet was consistent in his critical approach, and he was not awed by great names; he had no higher opinion of Victor Hugo's plays than he had of Becque's. Hugo's characters were superficial; they lacked both depth and psychological import; they were unreal. A creation like Molière's Alceste, or Tartuffe, or Shakespeare's Hamlet has a complex

psychological core and breathes life. Each is so rich in his personality that he lends himself to many different interpretations. Successive generations of actors add some richness of detail to the personality, or see something new and striking in it that had been overlooked before their time. There are always potential new phases of development to be discovered in characters like Hamlet and Tartuffe because they come out alive from the texts and are not contrived by wit and skill. Hugo's character, Ruy Blas, is makeshift; there is nothing in it to stimulate an actor's imagination, so he will always make of it a stereotype, a mechanical portrait to serve a rhetorical purpose. Jovet admired Hugo's tremendous vitality in his poetry and novels; but his theatre, by comparison, revealed his impoverishment.<sup>26</sup>

Giraudoux's characters strongly appealed to Jovet because they had a fundamental plasticity, richness, and variety, so that they lent themselves to different interpretations. They belong to the great tradition. This is certainly true of the characters in *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas Lieu* (*Tiger at the Gates*) which he next produced. Jovet's direction succeeded in bringing out not only the sensitive and poetic quality of the text, but also Giraudoux's underlying sympathetic warmth for his characters.

Jovet as Hector created a human and understandable character. Hector confessed that he had loved war in his youth and been intoxicated by the glory of battle. But he had been crushed with grief when he found a boon companion slain in battle. Then, he had suddenly realized the horror, cruelty, and waste of war. From that moment on he held war to be an offense against humanity. To fight a war merely to settle the fates of Paris, Helen, and Menelaus was madness. However, here is the irony of the matter, here is perverse human nature; when Ajax, Ulysses' drunken companion, tries to make love to Andromache in Hector's presence, Hector throws his deadly spear. Thus his carefully conceived antiwar edifice crumbles

under the pressure of emotion and the Trojan war breaks loose.<sup>27</sup>

Jouvet's costume for the role was a delight. He wore open-toed Grecian sandals, long tight black leggings, and a black tunic secured around his waist by a belt. A grey cloth shawl was draped over his shoulders. His outward appearance was calm; his voice, however, was vibrant and forceful, particularly when delivering his speech commemorating the dead, and he was all the more effective for these contrasts. Jouvet, who himself hated war, felt so close to the character that his identification with it gave it a terrible force and authenticity. Since he could supply the small details which make a portrait recognizable to the audience, his performance had remarkable impact and left a memorable impression.

The décor was simple—an assemblage of white cubes, disposed to represent different objects with lights in varying colors and intensities shining on them. Act I took place on a terrace in Troy. Act II took place in a square beyond which was the sea. Standing like ominous sentinels on either side of the stage, the gates of war stood ajar.

*Le Supplément au Voyage de Cook*, the second play of the evening, was modeled after Diderot's *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*. Giraudoux's lighthearted bantering comedy takes place in Tahiti, in the year 1769. The plot is both uncomplicated and droll. Captain Cook, before disembarking his crew in Tahiti, sends the Protestant missionary and his wife (Romain Bouquet and Annie Cariel) in advance to clear the way for an understanding between the British and the Polynesians. On talking to Outourou (Jouvet), the tribal chief, they are astonished to find what they consider to be frank animism and laxity of morals on this island. This gives Giraudoux ample opportunity to satirize French mores.

The play is comic as the situation suggests. Outourou was dressed in a short pleated white skirt, with a grass ankle-bracelet on each ankle and on his left knee, and two beaded

bracelets on his upper arms. His chest was bare. He wore a scalloped white collar, and around his neck, three large beaded necklaces and other ornamental accessories. The rest of the male inhabitants were dressed in similar fashion, but with less ostentation. The women wore grass skirts and bodices, with flowers in their hair. The intrusion of the stately Protestant missionary, in severe black suit and black hat, among these brilliantly costumed uninhibited Tahitians, brought the audience to hilarious uproar. *Le Supplément au Voyage de Cook* and *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas Lieu* were both eminently successful.

The versatile Jovet, actor, movie star,<sup>28</sup> director, designer of stage sets, technician, lecturer, was now about to receive one more honor. He was commissioned to write several articles on the theatre for the French Encyclopedia. The first, published in December, 1935, under the title of "L'Interprétation dramatique," discussed the art of the *comédien*.

In the article, Jovet defined the *acteur* as contrasted with the *comédien*. The *acteur*, Jovet wrote, is restricted in the practice of his art by the nature of his talent and the excess of his personality. He can play only a few roles since "he can only present a distortion of his own personality." The *comédien*, on the other hand, has the inherent capacity to play all types; "an actor enters the skin of a character, the comedian is entered by it."<sup>29</sup>

A tragedian, for example, is always an *acteur*, that is, an interpreter whose personality is strong, self-evident, and robust. But his *mimétisme* keeps his role intact even when his personality tends to intrude and deform it; and the audience accepts the creation despite his strong intrusive personality. *Mimétisme* is defined by Jovet as a force similar to hypnotism. It is evident in the childhood of the born actor. A perfect *comédien* is one who has intensely developed this power. One might conclude that the main difference between the *acteur* and the *comédien* is in the full use and the mimetic force with



which the *comédien* is by nature endowed, as against the exploitation of his personality on the part of the *acteur*; one is flexible and adaptable, the other limited. The *comédien* is the character he portrays. The *acteur* is always himself.

Holding these views, Jouvét naturally denied that any benefit derived from subjecting the emergent actor to any rigid rules and regulations. Another objection to formal training, said Jouvét, is that the theatre is fluid and subject to different influences in different generations. Hence the *comédien* must be prepared to adapt himself to new conditions, to the atmosphere of different epochs.

The student, before he adopts the profession of actor, must be certain that he is endowed with the mystical *mimétisme* which will fit him for his vocation; besides, he must have certain physical qualities—a harmonious body, good voice, a mobility which is capable of expressing a wide range of emotions. Jouvét conceded that there have been French tragedians who did not possess these specifications, such as Lekain, Talma, and Mounet-Sully. But according to him France never has had a pure and true *comédien*.

Secondly, and very importantly, the student must show that he has the capacity to absorb and fully understand the text he is to help interpret; he must be capable of visualizing the text as it will be brought to light on the stage. For this he must have an accurate and vivid imagination, backed by a broad knowledge of human beings and their conduct under stress. The actor, according to Jouvét, is merely a parasite who lives on the blood of the text and his function is to nourish the audience with the living stuff he has brought to life from it.

Thirdly, the student must learn instinctively how to establish an accord among himself, his fellow actors, and his public. To begin with, he must impose upon himself an inner peace before he walks on stage, and obtain, concurrently, a physical deconcentration, a kind of dim inward relaxation, a spiritual plasticity, a mood receptive to the molding of his character.

And while performing with his fellows, he must subtly control this quasi-mediumlike personality, be it, and live it. When the actor has succeeded in completely living the life of his role, his personal magnetism will be felt and will penetrate the audience. If, however, the actor should fail to lose himself in the role, or if the others in the cast should fail to establish a harmony with him, the play may at best become mechanical, or at worst, go to pieces.<sup>30</sup>

During this period Jouvét's mind turned more and more to the philosophical and psychological aspects of the theatre. They wove a pattern through his mind and influenced his way of life. It was fortunate for him that he could give expression to his ideas and at the same time fulfill one of his greatest ambitions, the production of Molière's *L'Ecole des Femmes* with himself as Arnolphe. In 1909, he had played Arnolphe in the production given at the Université Populaire du Faubourg St. Antoine. He had acted in the role of Arnolphe in his test for admission to the Conservatoire. But he had not until now felt fully prepared to produce the play, and it might be observed that *L'Ecole des Femmes* was the first classical play Jouvét had produced since he had become director of a theatre.<sup>31</sup>

*L'Ecole des Femmes*, written in 1662, was one of Molière's greatest successes during his lifetime. Since then, the Théâtre-Français had produced it over a thousand times. However, the play, like words too often used without sharpness of definition, had in time become shopworn; it required an original and vigorous production to bring it to life in all its vitality and magnificence.

But so much preparatory work had to be done that three months before its scheduled opening, Jouvét still doubted whether it would be ready in time. But he resolved to open on the scheduled date despite all obstacles and reverses. Consequently, he threw himself into the preparations with renewed zest.

Jouvet's view of Molière's work was not based on past conceptions. He did not study critical analyses of the play, of which there were hundreds, but was inspired by the text alone. He intended to evoke the play from the text, and he accomplished this with such skill and broad humanity that his production of *L'Ecole des Femmes* became a shining example for future producers of Molière.

Jouvet sought a new approach to the classical comedy. First, he rid himself of all preconceived ideas about the text, and outdated conceptions about the costumes, décors, and *mise en scène*. Moreover, he was going to present it in its entirety, as few before him had had the courage to do. In no better way could he express its scope as Molière had planned it.<sup>32</sup> Jouvet's enthusiasm and the inspired support of his troupe were richly rewarded. His Arnolphe was so brilliantly conceived that many thought the real Arnolphe had been resurrected, the Arnolphe to whom Molière had given the breadth of life and who supposedly had died with him. In past productions, Arnolphe had often been portrayed as being crotchety, peevish, and surly. Léon Bernard had portrayed him as sheepish, naïve, and selfish; Leloir played him as a dry and despicable fellow; and Lucien Guitry made him both sober and severe (and by so doing, he had turned a comedy into a tragedy, a consummate piece of misconception on his part of Molière's intentions).

Jouvet was a jocular Arnolphe, gloating over every trick he played. Above all, he delighted in conceiving himself as an exceptional husband to whom his wife would never be unfaithful. He was far too perspicacious a fellow, he thought, ever to be duped. Confiding his theories on marriage to Crysalde, and planning how to keep Agnès faithful (by locking her up and permitting her to have no visitors), he was delightfully amusing to the audience in the way he coddled and deceived himself. This portrayal was at complete variance with the conception of his predecessors.<sup>33</sup> Jouvet portrayed Arnolphe

as a good-humored and almost ferociously gay man.<sup>34</sup>

Laughter greeted him as soon as he strutted on to stage. In spite of the *funambulesque* quality of the play, the brief encounters, the abrupt departures, the village interludes, the *asides*, Jovet always kept matters in balance, and with brilliant agility, maintained the tone and poetry of the dialogue. He gave Paris something completely Molièresque, a happy medium between farce and high comedy.<sup>35</sup>

There was also great variety in Jovet's acting. His Arnolphe was constantly moving about, and he had a broad range of significant and amusing gestures. His eyes were fascinating to an audience, with their brilliant and varied changes of mood. At one moment they would be full of laughter, at the next, they would be intent; then a fresh surprise, changing suddenly to desperation, and once again an expression of sheer joy in his own high animal spirits and delight in the clever planning and inventions.

All the props in the play contained a subtle significance. Jovet's walking stick, for instance, like G ronte's umbrella, in the Vieux-Colombier production of *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, clearly revealed what he did not, and need not, say; it was a tool of pantomime. He leaned on it when fatigued; he let it fall when unhappy. In a fit of temper, he threw his handkerchief down, and in a moment of anguish, hid his face in it. He used these props to carry the currents of his feeling beyond his own physical self.

Jovet also knew how to express irony. In Act III, for example, before reading the maxims on marriage to Agn s, Arnolphe first savored his own superiority; then, believing he would be an exceptionally fortunate husband, let his joy bubble out of him. This was indeed ironical since he was naively deluding himself on all counts. Pierre Brisson wrote that Jovet's acting in this scene was one of the high points in the production.<sup>36</sup>

When, however, a painful fact penetrates his hide, Arnolphe

begins to waver. Then Jovet suddenly plays an uneasy Arnolphe, with a chastened heart and clear insight. Now, since he is unsure of his power to hold a woman, he is sadly distressed and expresses it superbly. While still in a state of happy illusion about himself, Jovet's features are composed; but when invaded by doubts and fears, his face goes out of control in gargoyle distortions. But only for a few seconds. He soon recovers his complacency since he is not deeply hurt, only offended in his pride; his crisis is the result of great jealousy. Arnolphe wants to possess Agnès, just as Harpagon (*L'Avare*) wanted to possess his moneybox, as a valued possession. At the end of the third act, in Agnès' room, after hearing that Agnès wrote a love letter to Horace, Arnolphe goes mad with jealousy. But the role is basically comic since Arnolphe is too richly fortified with an abundant supply of vanity for any hurt to leave a deep scar; and like a rubber ball, he always bounces back. Jovet kept the play on just that comic level.

Jovet understood this character so perfectly and sustained it so well that he was never forced to resort to theatrical artifices or stereotypes during any performance. He brought out the ground swells and rich rhythmic patterns of Molière's text. His speech was always clear and sharp and never slurred, despite some difficult versification. This added a new dimension of beauty and significance to the production. Moreover, the text had been so well digested by the actors that they could be fully cooperative and understanding; the cast was a unit, and all of the members instruments through which Molière's lines came to life.

Pierre Brisson felt, however, that Jovet sometimes carried his clowning too far. In Act IV, for example, in the garden, Jovet rushes up and down the ladder several times to see what is going on beyond the garden walls. Brisson wrote that these unnecessary gymnastics were not only absurd and out of place, but they also turned a light comedy into a broad

farce.<sup>37</sup> Lucien Dubech on the other hand applauded Jouvet's acting.

At last! At last, an actor who is sufficiently intelligent to treat Molière as a comic and his comedies as comedies! At last, the purging of romanticism, the return to taste and common sense, to moral and intellectual health, to the separation of genres, in short, as we see it, the return to the true spirit of Molière and his century, the return to classic art.<sup>38</sup>

Jouvet's production, with the actors circulating gaily about the stage in their colorful costumes, wove an enchanting tapestry and reminded many of the *commedia dell'arte* with its ballets and spirited improvisations.<sup>39</sup>

"The scene takes place in a city square," wrote Molière. He did not name the town. When Arnolphe asked Horace what he thought of it, Horace answered:

Numerous are the citizens and superb are the buildings. And I believe marvelous are the recreations.

In past production the stage sets had been many and varied. When the Comédie-Française produced *L'Ecole des Femmes* in 1922, the *metteur en scène* placed a small platform in front of Agnès' house and several scenes were enacted there. When the play was produced at the Odéon, the platform was dispensed with in favor of a garden. Antoine used a garden in his production because, he maintained, when Arnolphe asked Agnès to walk with him, in Act II, he said: "The walk is beautiful, very beautiful." So a director might conclude that Agnès and Arnolphe were walking in the garden through different paths.<sup>40</sup>

Jouvet, however, was more ingenious than his predecessors. He kept to one stage set, but the set parted to disclose another décor, giving the impression of two distinct sets. At the opening of the play, the stage represented a deserted public square. There were arcades both in the rear on the sides of the stage. In the center, there was a towerlike structure, Agnès' house, with a circular balcony. This structure stood in a garden, surrounded by walls which converged diagonally toward the

prompter's pit. When Arnolphe entered Agnès' house, the walls drew back, disclosing a charming garden with rose bushes, espaliered fruit and other kinds of trees. Pierre Sonrel wrote: "The working of this set merits attention in that one observes here the most orthodox principles of classical machinery applied to a finished set."<sup>41</sup>

Agnès' house was painted white with red daubs. To some this seemed a radical departure from Molière's intentions for when Horace pointed to the house, he said, "of which you see the reddened walls." But the word "reddened" can be interpreted in several ways: made of brick, or painted red, or covered with vines in their autumnal colors. Jouvét preferred the last interpretation. He believed that the play took place at the summer's end and that the foliage had already turned color. Bérard carried out Jouvét's ideas when he created the sets. His décor was Italian in spirit. He used large areas of white with red daubs to give the house a rustic air. The garden walls and the colorful vines also served to conceal the actors when making their asides, thus making the asides seem more natural.<sup>42</sup> The lighting effects were striking and unusual. Five chandeliers were suspended from the ceiling of the stage into each of which fitted many candles. When lighted, they produced the effect of illuminated sticks of candy. The spotlight was used to good effect; when Agnès conversed with Horace (Act II, scene V) a pink light shone on her, when she was alone or talking with others, a white light illumined the stage. But the incidental music, composed by Vittorio Rieti, did not meet with the favor of all the critics.

*L'Ecole des Femmes* was another of Jouvét's great triumphs. Many favorable, as well as some amusing criticisms attended this production. For instance, Pierre Bost, Jouvét's friend, wrote a highly favorable review of *L'Ecole des Femmes* under the pseudonym of M. Lasalle. Jouvét was so touched by this review that he wrote M. Lasalle the following letter, without realizing that he was writing to Pierre Bost:

Sir,

I was too appreciative of your criticism of *L'Ecole des Femmes* to forego the pleasure of telling you so.

I am not particularly fond of mimed tableaux and I am convinced that another producer will perhaps find a less artificial solution. What was of import to me was the tone of the play, and the fact that you appreciated our show completely satisfies me.

Thank you also for the support you are giving us in sending the public to see the play.<sup>43</sup>

Jouvet's interest in Molière did not cease with the production of *L'Ecole des Femmes*; on the contrary, he was later to lecture on Molière, write articles about him, and produce more of his plays. Several weeks before his first lecture on Molière, he was made an Officer of the Legion of Honor. About this time, too, he was honored with the offer of the position of General Administrator of the Comédie-Française. Jouvet, however, declined and suggested Edouard Bourdet in his place. He also suggested that Copeau, Dullin, Baty, and himself be invited to become *metteurs en scène* for the Comédie-Française.<sup>44</sup> The President of the Republic, in agreement with Jouvet, decreed the following:

Article I: The playwright Edouard Bourdet has been named general director of the Comédie-Française to replace Mr. Emile Fabre who has been granted the permission, at his own request, to assert his claim for a pension beginning Oct. 15, 1936, at which date Mr. Edouard Bourdet is to assume his active duties.

Article II: Messrs. Gaston Baty, Jacques Copeau, Charles Dullin, Louis Jouvet will be in charge of the staging.<sup>45</sup>

As official *metteur en scene* for the Comédie-Française, Jouvet's interests were not limited to the designing of sets; he also concerned himself with remodeling obsolete Parisian theatres.

This was an excellent outlet for his constructive energy; but he wished that he could erect an ideal theatre, to

... construct a theatrical art, starting from its architecture, to recover its Aeschylusian function, thanks to the remains of the theatres of Dionysus or Epidaurus, and the character of Shakespeare's, from the tracks left by that extinct animal which was the Globe theatre, that of Molière



in the Versailles, where his plays were performed—in brief, to bring forth from a stone-like vertebrae, the large, living body of a by-gone mystery.<sup>46</sup>

While Jovet was building these theatrical castles in the air, he was making his fourth movie, *Mr. Flow*;<sup>47</sup> during the same period, he was directing, though not acting in a three-act play, *Château de Cartes*, by his friend Stève Passeur. Passeur was pessimistic about the success of his play which opened on January 9, 1936. Jovet, to the astonishment of his friends, was exceedingly optimistic about it. Before the opening, he told Passeur that they would “make something good of this!”<sup>48</sup> It turned out that Passeur was right.

In spite of this failure, the season 1936-1937 was to be a rich one for Jovet. It was the tricentenary anniversary of Corneille's *Le Cid*. The directors of the Comédie-Française decided to celebrate it with a revival of Corneille's plays. The new administrator, Edouard Bourdet, soon realized that there was not sufficient time for this ambitious undertaking, and that it would be wiser to produce just one of his plays. The choice fell on *L'Illusion Comique*. This was surprising since *L'Illusion Comique* had been given only a few times at the Comédie-Française and had been almost forgotten by both actors and public. But the choice pleased Jovet since so much of the world of Corneille still remained unexplored and this play had many strange and surprising features. As Pierre Lièvre remarked, this production was “the remittance of a valuable heritage a long time left vacant.”<sup>49</sup>

Jovet shortened the name of the play to *L'Illusion*, feeling that the brief title lent mystery to the play and suggested a more subtle and vague atmosphere.

*L'Illusion Comique* is played on two levels, the realistic and the supernatural,<sup>50</sup> and so many changes of scene are necessary that Pierre Lièvre wrote:

Jovet is the only man who has succeeded in making use of the machinery at the Théâtre Pigalle. It was certain that he would use wisely that with which the Théâtre-Français has just been provided.<sup>51</sup>

As usual Jouvot devoted a great deal of time to the study of the text, which had to do with a magician, a subject very popular in the seventeenth century. To find the proper background for the production, he not only rummaged among previous ones, but also consulted Mahelot's *Mémoire*, according to which the décor of the first production was as follows:

In the middle, we must have a highly decorated palace; on one side of the theatre, another, for a magician, above, on a mountain. On the other side of the theatre, a park. For the first act, a night, a moon which moves, some nightingales, an enchanted mirror, a wand for the magician, some iron collars or manacles, some trumpets, some paper horns, a hat of cypress for the magician.<sup>52</sup>

But Christian Bérard's sets differed considerably from these. The first scene of Act I was heavy with a sense of mystery and foreboding, for the audience was confronted with a huge grotto draped with black curtains, looking, in semidarkness, much like a monstrous mouth. Inside the magician stood in his shelter. At a flourish of the magician's wand, the mouth opened, and apparitions appeared in it, following each other in quick succession, unfolding the marvelous adventures of the *Matamore*, *Isabelle* and *Clindor*. During the proceedings, fantastic structures rose from the stage and descended from the roof; grotesquely dressed buffoons dance a fanciful ballet. Then a prison, looking like an extravagant bird cage, was slowly lowered from the ceiling. Act V was equally strange and Goyesque. A small theatre, illuminated by candles, moved slowly from the rear of the theatre out to the forestage. Spectators were sitting in boxes dressed in black and white. The actors wore gold costumes. They appeared briefly, and faded as the curtains came down. Once again, the audience was confronted with the openmouthed grotto of Act I.<sup>53</sup>

The dreamy and eerie lighting effects conceived by Jouvot lent an illusionist quality to the performance. The strange grouping of people on stage, the abrupt irrational movements of some of the actors, the whirling ballets, and the hallucinating atmosphere created by the phantoms appearing in quick

succession, gave a strange nightmarish quality to the production. The colorful costumes were like flashes of brilliant lights against a web of darkness and mystery. An example of the dramatic use of color was Isabelle's arrival in her blue chariot, dressed in mauve, and preceded by musicians dressed in black and white costumes. Jouvot wrote:

Corneille, through the collaboration of Christian Bérard, will no doubt discover for the first time, the true elements of witchcraft, which it calls forth, composed of wit, grace, youth, and freshness. Thanks to his sketches, I understood the rather fantastic, extravagant, and Romanesque poetry in it.<sup>54</sup>

But some critics thought that Corneille's play should have been presented more simply. René Doumic, on the other hand, remarked that the *mise en scène* was most appropriate, and "we do not know how to congratulate Jouvot enough for having so successfully produced it."<sup>55</sup> Pierre Lièvre added a dissenting note, affirming that both Jouvot and Bérard had taken too many liberties with the direction of Act V. Act V was a difficult act to produce because of its change of scene and its fantasy-like nature. In Antoine's production at the Odéon forty years ago, he wrote, the last act had been eliminated. In the production at the Comédie-Française, sixty years ago, the last act had been replaced by the first act of Corneille's *Don Sanche d'Aragon*.<sup>56</sup>

Nevertheless, *L'Illusion* was a great popular success, and on opening night, in response to the audience's acclamation, the actors placed a bust of Corneille on the stage. This, said Maurice Martin du Gard was "again a lesson in good taste which Louis Jouvot gave us."<sup>57</sup>

Two days after the opening night of *L'Illusion*, Jouvot was again invited to lecture on Molière. However, he was so busy that he hardly had time to prepare the lecture, and in a letter to Giraudoux remarked:

I have not as yet delivered my lecture on Molière and I am filled with anguish because I shall barely have three or four days to prepare it after the dress rehearsal; the subject becomes more and more extensive. It

fantasy and humor. The right approach to Molière is through the gateway of love. However, the actor who wants to play Molière's characters must pass through three phases. In the first, he must read and reread the play, ignoring all the commentaries that have been written about it, and thus "he strips himself more and more, he strips himself to the extreme limit, to the very text itself, and he savors its integrality, he finds anew the necessary calm before the aridity of cold type."<sup>64</sup> The actor is now gripped by the play, by its rhythm, its poetry, its characters, and its pervasive comedy. Then,

having a conception of the characters set both in heart and mind, the rehearsal of the text proceeds, at a more leisurely pace, assured as one is that this text conceals a real existence, with which one will have to take infinite precautions if one wants to recapture its meaning, its motion and its secret.<sup>65</sup>

The second phase focuses on the result of this newfound intimacy between the actor and the character he is to portray. Love for Molière is born—a love based on understanding, appreciation, and admiration, a love which increases in intensity with time.

During those moments when the feeling of sympathy reaches a state of mystical hypnosis, one searches for an inflection which one feels would be right, a tone which would be exact, a rhythm which would correspond, an air or gesture which would seem to be true; a tiny indication, a sort of spark of life, something which, from all these sentences, from all these gestures, would be said, done, played by the character himself, and which would completely reassure, would attest to this existence which one has just discovered and understood, but of which one wants to have, like an interior and living certitude, an active certitude.<sup>66</sup>

The third phase emphasizes the necessity of continued study of the character portrayed—his gestures, intonation, facial expressions. Furthermore, the actor must now visualize the play as a whole; he must have a solid grasp of its rich and complex design and interdependent parts, its rising and falling tensions. But unfortunately, in many cases today, "this text has lost its meaning and its dramatic power, because one detached it from the plot which clarified it and made it live. It is the action

of the play, one eventually understands, which is of moment now."<sup>67</sup>

Jouvet himself was at this time preparing to write a book on Molière.<sup>68</sup> He had been considering it since his student days at the Faculté de Pharmacie. Unfortunately, he never completed the book, and many years were to pass before he produced another Molière play.

Jouvet, who found much spiritual and aesthetic satisfaction in the reading and production of Molière's plays, found a similar satisfaction in the reading and production of Giraudoux's works. It was with happy anticipation that he started rehearsals on a new three-act play by Giraudoux, *Electre*.

Once again Giraudoux turned to antiquity for material. He followed the classical unities of time, place, and action and proclaimed as his thesis:

Humanity, by a faculty of forgetfulness and by the dread of complications, reabsorbs the great crimes. But at each epoch, there arise pure beings, who do not want these great crimes to be reabsorbed and who prevent their reabsorption, even if they use means which provoke other crimes and new disasters.

Electra is of those beings. She will attain her goal, but at the price of frightful catastrophes.<sup>69</sup>

Watching Jouvet during rehearsals, Giraudoux was so impressed by his passion for perfection of detail that he remarked to a reporter:

I am working with Jouvet, but I am his pupil. We have already produced seven plays together. A text written for a few, he turns into a play for all. I have just come back from a trip. I was away ten days and during that time I did not have a single worry.<sup>70</sup>

Everyone connected with the troupe noted an astonishing change for the better in Jouvet; he was in almost constant good humor while directing the rehearsals and this was the first time, as far as they could remember, that rehearsals had gone smoothly. In the past, he had always appeared harassed and apprehensive.

Jouvet played the part of a God-inspired beggar, *le Mendiant*. In a language laced with imagery and irony, he com-

mented on the acts of fellow men, while probing their most secret thoughts, eventually to make dire prophesies about them. His part was somewhat similar to that of the chorus of antiquity.

Jouvet's ascetic and worn body conferred upon him the mysterious authority of one who possesses powers a little more than human. Whenever he commented on events, his eyes stared blindly into a void as they seemed to envision approaching disaster. And yet he was powerless to arrest the accelerating force of disaster. He could foresee what was coming, but could not act to prevent its occurrence. He was merely a prophetic vessel.

Jouvet spoke his lines in a sharp staccato style. By breaking off the ultimate vowel at the end of a phrase, he limited its resonance and imposed a particular rhythm on his speech. This gave to certain of his lines an incantatory quality, which recalled the manner in which prophetic pronouncements of old were made. To vary the effect, Jouvet would sometimes speak in a singsong fashion, and this added a ritualistic quality to the text.<sup>71</sup> Benjamin Crémieux praised Jouvet's measured and elegant gestures: "Mr. Giraudoux conceived the character of the beggar (which will remain one of Jouvet's great roles) whose prophesying is inspired almost solely by his profound knowledge of animal life."<sup>72</sup>

The entire production was artistically conceived. On the stage, in the rear, stood Clytemnestra's palace, with its lateral porticos, built of blocks resembling pure white marble. Lights shone on the palace, changing in hue from light rose to blue. The shadows varied from yellow to emerald green, and as day fell they turned to ashen gray.<sup>73</sup> Although the décor remained fixed, the iridescent and polychromatic quality of the lighting gave variety and haunting beauty to Clytemnestra's palace.<sup>74</sup> Electra was often the focus of these varied lights. Caught in their interplay, while sitting back against a Grecian column of the palace, caressing Orestes' head lying in her lap, she

achieved a mystical and stately quality, which made her appear like a demigoddess.

The staging of *Electre* presents still another point of interest. For the first time, perhaps, there were two staircases on the stage, both behind the palace. The actors could go up and down rapidly because Jovet had installed elevators. In *L'Ecole des Femmes* and in *Le Château de Cartes*, Jovet had made use of only one elevator. In *Electre*, however, there were five elevators and two staircases.<sup>75</sup>

In Jovet's revival of *La Guerre de Troie*, he used the lateral porticos which he had introduced in his production of *Electre*, and by so doing, created a *lieu-type* for Giraudoux's tragedies. Moreover, he used lighting effects somewhat similar to those so successfully employed in *L'Ecole des Femmes*. In *La Guerre de Troie*, however, instead of suspending five chandeliers from the ceiling he hung three antique lamps. The new costumes, designed by Christian Bérard, were far more luxurious; they were embellished with bright colorful stones, which glittered like jewels when the lights played on them. To increase the climatic power of Hector's oration over the dead, Jovet wisely restored the scenes preceding it, which had been omitted in his original production. Moreover, he replaced *Le Supplément au Voyage de Cook*, which had followed *La Guerre de Troie* in the original production, with a new one-act play by Giraudoux, *L'Impromptu de Paris*.

The background for *La Guerre de Troie* was used for *L'Impromptu de Paris*, with a few additions. Since the story revolved around a rehearsal, a few essential props were necessary, such as a small director's table, household chairs, and paper strewn about here and there to indicate casual disorder. The general impression was that in *L'Impromptu de Paris*, Giraudoux was deriding the drama critics. But Jovet said that this play followed sound theatrical tradition in permitting the actors to speak freely on any subject related to their profession. So, following Giraudoux's text, they gave their candid opinions

of directors, spectators, critics, authors, and actors.<sup>76</sup>

This personal touch was not original with Giraudoux; it had been introduced by Molière in his *Impromptu de Versailles*. However, Molière used *L'Impromptu de Versailles* as a weapon against attackers; and, as the play progressed, he himself became the aggressor. Giraudoux, on the contrary, had not been subject to any onslaught by critics, and so his play is devoid of belligerency. Giraudoux spoke in general terms, and those few who took offense, feeling the criticism leveled at them, naturally reacted unfavorably to the play.<sup>77</sup> There were many critics who fumed at what they took to be insults flung at them. Jovet was so disturbed by some unfavorable comments that he wrote the following letter to Giraudoux:

My dear friend,

I did not send you the rest of the criticisms of *Impromptu*. They are just as absurd as the first ones, which you must have received, and bear witness to the necessity of beginning the experiment anew at the first opportunity, and of dotting all the "i's." An "Impromptu" must be, in spite of everything, a play. We had a number of critics who had not lacked faith in it at the try-out, others were no more understanding than usual, and the rest would have wished more vehemence. You can't satisfy everybody. It's always the same story, the fable of the miller, his son, and the donkey.<sup>78</sup>

In a second letter written to Giraudoux a year later, Jovet once again expressed his concern.

My dear friend,

An apprehensive silence greeted *Impromptu*, but afterwards, with the *Guerre* aroused the enthusiasm of the audience. Unfortunately, the receipts until now are not good. Tonight, the fifth performance, we took in only 4,900 francs. It is the beginning of December and it is a revival. It is difficult to perform, but the actors are in high spirits. The *Impromptu* entertains and amuses.

Madeleine acts very remarkably because she speaks and declaims her text loudly and clearly, with an evenness of tone, without those gesticulations in which she formerly indulged, and she acts with pleasure.<sup>79</sup>

Jovet was fond of *Impromptu de Paris*. He believed that audiences should be taken into the confidence of the actors and have some knowledge of the jobs of those connected with



the theatre. Once, when asked by a journalist, "What is happening to the theatre?" he remarked that the worst possible blow the theatre could suffer would be indifference on the part of the audience. "The theatre is prosperous only under force or protection; it would waste away under indifference."<sup>80</sup> He further stated that life in the theatre was "a life where the spiritual appears to have reconquered its rights over material things, the word over acting, the text over the spectacle for the eyes."<sup>81</sup>

A sensitive and intelligent attitude toward life was now re-appearing on the French stage. Jouvét welcomed it as a return to the basic traditions of the theatre. But in pursuing this trend, playwrights and directors would not be considered innovators, but rather continuers of tradition in the classical sense of the word. The naturalistic way had been found sterile. Once again the theatre was in a position to stimulate the intellectual life of the nation.<sup>82</sup> And this is just what Jouvét thought he would succeed in doing in his next production, Marcel Achard's *Le Corsaire*.

After Jouvét had read the play, he was puzzled by some aspects of it. He discussed these problems with Achard.

Jouvét: Your play is certainly a funny one.

Achard: Yes, isn't it?

Jouvét: It's not a drama, however.

Achard: Oh! certainly not.

Jouvét: Nor is it a fairy-play.

Achard: It's not that either.

Jouvét: You're not going to tell me, all the same, that it's a satirical play?

Achard: I would not do any such thing.

Jouvét: For all that, there is a fairy-play, a drama, and a satire in it?

Achard: If you wish.

Jouvét: There is comedy in it, in any case.

Achard: Oh! yes. A lot of comedy.

Jouvét: And poetry.

Achard: Obviously, it is an extremely poetic play.

Jouvét: But what do you want us to try to bring out the most, the comedy or the poetry?

Achard: I don't know. We will certainly see.<sup>83</sup>

*Le Corsaire* took place on three levels: present reality, past

reality, and a higher or spiritualized reality. Jouvet realized that such a play would be difficult to produce since the scenes skipped from an eighteenth-century pirate's frigate to a contemporary Hollywood studio. He and Bérard had to discover a technique which would make such abrupt changes seem plausible. He finally decided to use some intricate theatrical machinery which was somewhat similar to that employed successfully by the *commedia dell'arte*. There had to be a basic décor which could stand for both the background of the Hollywood studio and the pirate ship.

This basic décor consisted of a darkly paneled pirate cabin with a bed built into the wall; in addition, there were a heavy mahogany table, a large chest, and a porthole which penetrated the semiobscurity.

When the scene took place in Hollywood, a director's table, a telephone, and chairs were added. When the scene reverted to the eighteenth century, the stage was obscured, and from the area under the stage a structure rose representing the exterior of the frigate; this was fitted together in full view of the audience. Meanwhile, incidental music composed by Vittorio Rieti imitated the sound of waves and wind, sails and anchors being hoisted on board. After the structure had been fitted together, the music ceased. A bright light shone upon the new set. Over the ship's framework waved the skull-and-crossbones of the pirates' flag. On either side and in the center of the ship's framework there hung three dimly shining blue ship's lanterns. Benjamin Crémieux described them as being as unforgettable as "the pink walls of Arnolphe's house opening on to a garden of roses and trellises . . ." <sup>84</sup>

In *Le Corsaire*, Jouvet played two roles: Frank O'Hara, the Western film star, and Kid Jackson, the pirate. As Frank O'Hara, he was a brash and unruly fellow, first appearing with a bloody bandage on his head. As Kid Jackson, he wore a handsome pirate costume with a cloak and a broad-brimmed hat. His voice varied from the mellow to cracked and scratchy

tones, his throat having been affected by the abuse of rum. Jovet gave a distinctive portrayal of each role, and he displayed remarkable facility in going from one to another. As Robert Kemp aptly put it,

Jovet is admirable. Mysterious without effort; and playing, one would say, several instruments; in 1716, the buccaneer's accordion; in 1936, the saucy jazz trumpet.<sup>85</sup>

To succeed in achieving the complicated effects required by this play, Jovet made full use of the opportunities of the well-equipped mechanized stage. The stage of the Athénée Theatre was in the shape of a deformed semicircle, almost like a horseshoe. The sets could be placed on the stage in three different ways: either raised from the pit under the stage, placed on the stage directly from storage areas in the rear, or let down from the ceiling.

Sensitive Frenchmen dislike elaborate or heavy and complicated décors. Still classicists at heart, they are also repelled by any mixture of the genres. It has been well said that a Frenchman comes to the theatre to listen and that the décor is, for him, of secondary interest. In fact, Giraudoux once stated that the Frenchman "believes in the spoken word and not the decor."<sup>86</sup> The real *coup de théâtre* is not the noise made by two hundred extras as they tramp on the stage, but rather by the nuances felt in the lines spoken by the protagonists. Combat, assassination, or rape, which are often seen on German stages, are replaced, in France, by lengthy speeches, sometimes almost similar to a barrister's pleading. The audience, therefore, is not merely a passive witness, but on the contrary, an active juror.<sup>87</sup> Décors should simply give the play a suitable background and credibility within the realm of the imagination.

Jovet had become increasingly dissatisfied with the décor used in his productions, and it struck him that outstanding French painters, such as Derain, Picasso, and Bérard could make an important contribution to the art. Moreover, theatri-

cal stage sets must be, before anything else, the fruit of long personal experience.<sup>88</sup>

When Jouvét produced *Cantique des Cantiques*, a one-act play by Giraudoux, and *Tricolore*, by Pierre Lestringuez, at the Comédie-Française, he had an opportunity to carry out his most recent conceptions of the role of the *metteur en scène*. He asked the well known painter Edouard Vuillard, then seventy years old, to create the sets for *Cantique des Cantiques*. As a young man, Edouard Vuillard had designed some of the programs for Lugné-Poë, founder of the Théâtre de l'Œuvre. The décor which Vuillard designed for Jouvét's latest Giraudoux play was attractive, but the play itself was uninteresting. The longer play in three acts, *Tricolore*, was almost unanimously condemned by the critics.

Perhaps both plays were produced with insufficient power and conviction to interest the audience. The theatre is a strange phenomenon, wrote Jouvét.

All dramatic art, that is to say, the inspiration of the writer, the genesis of his work, the actors' interpretations, the spectators' participation, all is summed up and expressed by that imaginative performance practiced on three measures, balanced in three phases, in which are adjusted and espoused the author's desire to have his fiction accepted as reality, the good will of the audience in permitting itself to be convinced, and that mediatory and intermediate friendship of the actor which is, according to Plato, the middle link of that chain which binds the spectator to the poet.<sup>89</sup>

But soon afterward, Jouvét offset these failures with a brilliant success, *Ondine*, one of Giraudoux's finest plays. *Ondine* was written as a short story in 1811 by the Baron de La Motte Fouqué, descendant of a French émigré to Germany. It had been widely read in many countries ever since. In 1909, Charles Andler, director of German literature studies at the Sorbonne, asked Jean Giraudoux, one of his students, to write for the following week, a commentary of it. Although Giraudoux wrote the critique, we are led to believe that he never handed it in.<sup>90</sup> Then, in 1939, Charles de Polignac showed Giraudoux a translation he had recently made of

*Ondine*, remarking that the story might well be effectively dramatized. Giraudoux was charmed by the exquisite beauty and ethereal nature of the water sprite. He proceeded at once to dramatize the story in highly personal and poetic terms.<sup>91</sup> As Giraudoux said: "I have written, if you wish, a digression on the subject of *Ondine*, which is pure fantasy, without any ties to real life."<sup>92</sup>

The three-act play was produced on May 4, 1939. Kleber Haedens was so enthusiastic about Jovet's performance as the soldier Hans in love with *Ondine*, that he described him as "unbending and unvanquished by fate," having shown "that he was the greatest tragedian of our time."<sup>93</sup> When Jovet first appeared on stage his voice was rude and warlike, revealing his lack of delicacy and sensibility. He was a vain, not fundamentally cruel fellow, and rather childish. He loved war for the opportunities it offered him. After falling in love with *Ondine*, his character slowly underwent a change, as if influenced by some tender magic. He became gentle, speaking in *sotto voce* tones: "The voice rarely departs from a pivotal note, within the limits of a third. The syllables are of equal duration."<sup>94</sup> But the time came when the soldier suffered a surfeit of *Ondine*, and there was a clash of wills between his human love and the unpredictable wild fairylike force. Then the soldier marched slowly to his doom, and *Ondine* went back to what she had been, void of any memory of her experience in the human world.

The décor for the play was designed by Pavel Tchelitchew. The first act took place in a fisherman's cabin, where *Ondine* lived as the daughter of an old couple. Tchelitchew, straying from reality, draped the room with fish nets which gracefully hung from heavy hand-hewn beams. He placed a rough table in the center of the stage and some stools around it. When the Chevalier Hans made his first entrance he was accompanied by a clap of thunder, the shutters of the cabin banging furiously. When *Ondine* appeared, the cabin was flooded

with light, thus indicating her bright and ethereal spirit.

The second act took place in the King's castle. Tchelitchew gave the main hall of the castle perspective by means of evenly spaced columns. The alternating black and white columns were made of marble. The white alabaster balustrade, on either side of the stage, was lighted from within; in the center of the throne room were placed three chairs made of carved white coral. When the cast walked on stage in their black, gray, white, green, and red costumes with their white plumes and fancy laces, the extravagant daubs of color lent a magic quality to the entire picture.

Act III opened on an outside court of Hans' castle. No longer did lyricism, fantasy, and beauty pervade the set: only somber silence and disillusionment. On either side of the stage stood severe gray walls of cement squares; in the center stood a platform. The harsh and clear-cut lines of this set were in stark contrast to the magnificence of the second act. To add to this mood was Tchelitchew's background canvas of harsh coloring and haunting beauty.

Edmond Sée was impressed by the décor; it was, he maintained, "of a diversity, of an evocative art, of a rather strange type of *baroquerie*, mysterious and hallucinating, as is appropriate."<sup>95</sup> The musical accompaniment, written by Henri Sauguet, was gay and spirited, alternating between the delicate and ethereal and the harsh and strident. It served to help create a fluid overall unity in the mood of the play.

Maurice Martin du Gard remarked:

Louis Jouvet produced *Ondine* and played the part of the knight with a zeal, a faith, a genius for the marvelous. He is the perfect interpreter and director for such a dramatic poet.<sup>96</sup>

Kleber Haedens added:

*Ondine* is one of Giraudoux' most stirring successes. We see the poet there, surrounded by familiar temptations, repel them one by one, and in the midst of all this, the phantasies of a romantic imagination, he calls down on his heroes, in a grave and inflexible voice, the fatalities of love.<sup>97</sup>

Whenever Jouvet produced a play by Giraudoux, the text,

being so subtle and individual, presented several problems. During the rehearsals, Jouvét was always convinced that the play was too delicate and subtle to achieve popular success. But Jouvét was mistaken in his pessimism, and Giraudoux was fortunate to have so conscientious and able an interpreter for his plays. Jouvét would spare no pains in trying to get all of the dramatic values out of the text, and he sometimes offered the author suggestions that were accepted, such as the elimination or addition of lines that would increase the tensions of the drama or the rounding out of the characters. Therefore, in a sense, Jouvét was Giraudoux's collaborator. The close association of these two gifted and sensitive men over the years was helpful in bringing out latent forces present in both of them. It was fortunate for the culture of France and the world that these two men met and worked together in such harmony.

When Jouvét turned to Molière and introduced a new *L'Ecole des Femmes*, his creation was such a living and vivid one, the true spirit of the text so well conveyed that Molière himself seemed once more to live among the French people. Molière, Corneille and Racine, wrote Jouvét, did not appear to their contemporaries as sacred stuffed effigies, writing classical texts, but rather were spinning vivid dramatic and human tales. It was because of their broad humanity that they were able to write with such freshness and force about the gaieties, troubles, and tragedies of men and women. It was just this freshness, this naturalness and sincerity which Jouvét succeeded in recapturing. As he himself said:

If I were eloquent, I could explain to you what emotion one can feel when playing a part like Arnolphe, which Molière created. He did not have much physical power, he was obliged to think of what he would do on stage, of his gestures, of his breathing. As for us, we rehearse for a long time, and then, one fine evening, the performance takes place. And suddenly we realize, by the beat of the lines themselves, by the prosody, by the flow of sentences, by their unity and their discontinuance, that we are going to be set exactly in Molière's shoes, forced to model ourselves on him, to imitate his breathing and his walk. I assure you that that is an extraordinary impression.<sup>98</sup>

He had come a long way since he had entered the acting profession. In 1923, Jouvet had been a man passionately in love with all phases of his profession. As he matured through the years, he became preoccupied with the more profound moral and philosophical aspects of the theatre. He had written and lectured on various aspects of the theatre, and had developed deeply personal theories on acting, stagecraft, and theatre architecture. He could call on the rich resources he possessed in these fields as well as on his knowledge of history, art, and literature. He was now, in the year 1939, much more than a man of the theatre; he was also a psychologist, which was helpful to him as a director and in the understanding of his group of actors. But his work, like that of so many others, was soon again to be abruptly checked by the forces of war breaking into the peaceful life of France.



## *The War Years*

### *1939-1945*

*By that solicitude, that warm friendship with which you surrounded us, our productions, our authors, and our country, you tried to surmise, to foresee what we had forgotten. It was not only your predilections which made you like that. You tried to find out, by our testimonies and in our presence, if France had forgotten her qualities, her faults, if it were possible that she had changed character in the midst of her difficulties, if it were possible that she was changing. I can reassure you today. France is alive.<sup>1</sup>*

The German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, forced England and France into a declaration of war against her. Jovet, in Paris at the time, saw many of his close friends and almost half of his cast mobilized. Of his crew of technicians, only two electricians and three mechanics remained behind. Under these circumstances, he could not reopen his theatre, so he accepted an offer to make a film in Nice, *Un Tel Père et Fils*.

After finishing the film, restless and deeply disturbed, he was eager to return to Paris. He was irresistibly drawn to the city in which he had felt so profoundly at home. In 1914,

when France had been drawn into a war which was to destroy the flower of her manhood, Jouvet was young enough to have been drafted into the armed forces. But even then, his correspondence indicated to what extent and how gravely he, a sensitive individual, suffered from the brutality and ravages of battle.

Several months later, on February 8, 1940, he had sufficiently recovered his health to be able to return to Paris. There he gathered enough actors, actresses, and technicians to begin rehearsals for a new production of *Ondine*.<sup>2</sup> But Jouvet was very unhappy in this fearful and feverish warlike atmosphere. On June 11, three days before the defeat of France, Jouvet left for Bordeaux. There he met many of his former companions who had fled persecution at the hands of the Nazis.

Jouvet, who was an unpolitical man, enjoyed a relatively unhampered life in the unoccupied zone. In Aix-en-Provence he regrouped some of the old members of his troupe and started to rehearse; he planned later on, in defiance of the Nazis, to bring his troupe to Paris. But they, declaring some of his plays (those by Giraudoux and Romaines particularly) to be "anti-cultural," forbade their production. The Nazis had complete control of all of France's cultural departments, including the press, radio, and theatre. They induced many well-known actors and actresses to collaborate with them, and these performers went even further than expected to please their masters by circulating a despicable soul-destroying propaganda.

Although Jouvet was fond of many German authors and had asked Giraudoux to adapt *La Petite Catherine de Heilbronn* by Heinrich von Kleist, he was unwilling to work under pressure, and while France was occupied by the Nazis, he could not bring himself to produce any classical or modern German play.<sup>3</sup>

But luckily, to relieve his distress and his sense of frustration, he accepted in October, 1940 an invitation by a Swiss theatrical

producer to tour Switzerland with his company in *L'Ecole des Femmes* and to make a moving picture based on the play. He sought permission of the government to leave. But the government would not give it; furthermore it refused him permission to leave Paris, where he had returned with the hope of producing his repertory, because of his free and democratic attitude. He persisted and after two months of unwinding red tape, Jovet managed to wangle the necessary pass from the government for his troupe and himself.

However, before receiving official sanction to depart, he was required to call on Lieutenant Raedeker of the German army. Arriving at eight in the morning, he was requested to wait. After several hours of waiting, Jovet lost patience, got up, and said to one of the attending officers: "I am leaving. Tell your commander that if he is a lieutenant in the German army. I am a general in my profession."<sup>4</sup> With this, Jovet left. He wrote:

I left Paris to go to Switzerland because I was not permitted to produce two of my authors: Jules Romains and Jean Giraudoux. They found them anti-cultural, they offered Schiller and Goethe in their places.

This was no longer my profession, there would have been equivocation. One can work in the theatre only with pleasure and in freedom.<sup>5</sup>

In Switzerland, Jovet played *L'Ecole des Femmes* to appreciative audiences. But he became so homesick that on February 21 he and his troupe returned to the unoccupied zone to give once again *L'Ecole des Femmes*. Whenever he was in France or in French territory, Jovet made it a point to perform a play by Molière for the stimulating effect it had on French audiences, who went into rapture because "Molière restored confidence." To them Molière stood for the undying honor and culture of a free France. Many in the audience were moved to tears when the old and trembling Arnolphe appeared on the stage. His appearance dispelled the prevailing spiritual *malaise*. A schoolteacher, Mlle Gippet, was so deeply affected by the emotional weight of the performance that she wrote Jovet the following note: "To serve France as you do, and now

to give us this comfort and this proof, may God bless you, Mr. Jouvét . . . go to many cities."

In February, 1941, Jouvét was invited by a representative of the Théâtre Odéon in Buenos Aires to present his repertory in South America. The invitation appealed to Jouvét for it afforded him an opportunity to introduce Molière and other eminent French playwrights to South America. The government granted Jouvét permission to make the tour.

Preparations for departure were hectic. There was so much work to be done. Special scenery had to be constructed, old sets repaired, and many rehearsals held; passports and visas had to be obtained. Jouvét commented on this:

This embassy finds me in very difficult circumstances, and I can just manage to take eight plays from my Athénée repertory: *Ondine*, *Electre*, *La Guerre de Troie, n'aura pas Lieu* by Giraudoux; *Knock* and *Le Trouhadec saisi par la Débauche* by Jules Romains; Molière's *L'Ecole des Femmes*; *Je vivrai un Grand Amour* by Stève Passeur; finally a triple bill, *La Jalousie du Barbouillé* by Molière, *La Folle Journée* by Emile Mazaud, and *La Coupe Enchantée* by La Fontaine and Champmeslé. I shall present these plays as they were staged in Paris, with the same sets.<sup>6</sup>

Jouvét gave strictly professional reasons for undertaking the tour, which was to last longer and cover more ground than he realized at the time. He was, in fact, to be away from France for four years: "The reasons I left Paris and then France are neither religious nor political, solely professional."<sup>7</sup>

The troupe left Lyon for Lisbon on May 27, 1941, and left Lisbon for Rio de Janeiro on June 6. During the difficult and hazardous voyage to South America, Jouvét rehearsed his cast daily. The actors displayed a fine *esprit de corps* and were courageous and self-disciplined in the face of their many difficulties at sea. They arrived at Rio de Janeiro on June 26 and performed nightly there from July 7 to July 26.<sup>8</sup>

Jouvét liked Brazil which, with its forty-five million inhabitants, comprised half of the total population of South America. He found the country exotic and very beautiful in many parts, and the people likable.<sup>9</sup> On July 28, the troupe

left Rio and performed first in São Paulo and then in Buenos Aires, Rosario, Santa Fé, and Montevideo. On October 7, they returned to Rio, from which port they intended to embark for France. But shortly before their planned departure, they were invited by the Brazilian, Argentinian, and Uruguayan governments to give a season of French theatre in their respective countries, with the expenses of the tour guaranteed. After consulting with his troupe,<sup>10</sup> Jovet decided to accept the offer.

The Canadian government then invited Jovet to Montreal, Quebec, and Ottawa; but the United States government refused him permission to enter Canada because the Vichy government, and not the Free French government in exile, had sponsored him. This decision hurt Jovet's pride and remained a sore point with him for the rest of his life.

Because the winter season in the South American countries did not begin until November, 1941, Jovet had some time on his hands. He divided it between rehearsing his cast and writing the preface for a new edition of his book entitled *Reflexions du Comédien*. He incessantly turned in his mind his favorite ideas on the theatre, and once more attempted to define the complicated craft of the actor. His definition in this preface was far more comprehensive than any before given by him. An actor's task, Jovet wrote, was the following:

To glut himself with, and then purge himself of his thoughts and energies in order to communicate them to his fellows, to publicly give vent to passions, dissimulated or with authority, to express another's feelings by giving them physical embodiment and, on his own account, to remain in a constant state of self deception, where sincerity goes so far as to lose its name, to pronounce or declaim what one would not have thought, to feel at times what one will never experience, to divest oneself constantly of one's own emotions, and turn oneself into another self, every season; there you have the life of this monster escaped from Buffon, the actor, so-called.<sup>11</sup>

By November, 1941, the beginning of the winter season, the cast was well rehearsed and was by now used to Rio's tropical climate which in the beginning had affected them with lassitude. The company performed *L'Ecole des Femmes*, *Knock*,

*Monsieur le Trouhadec Saisi par la Débauche, Electre, La Guerre de Troie, Ondine*; and it gave one performance consisting of excerpts from *La Jalousie du Barbouillé, La Folle Journée, La Coupe Enchantée*, and *Je Vivrai un Grand Amour*. Jouvét was both astonished and pleased by the favorable reception given him.

During the South American tour, Jouvét gave not only plays from his repertory, but also dared to risk producing a new play—*Je Vivrai un Grand Amour* by Stève Passeur. Since the play was successful, he took the people closer into his confidence and presented several new plays to South American audiences, giving South American composers and *metteurs en scène* opportunities to work with him.<sup>12</sup> This was an act of good will, a form of propaganda of which Jouvét approved.

During Jouvét's second season in South America which began on November 1, 1941 and ended on September 21, 1942, he produced: *L'Annonce Faite à Marie, Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, the first act of *Le Misanthrope*, *Tessa, Léopold le Bien-Aimé, On ne Badine pas avec l'Amour, Judith, La Belle au Bois, L'Occasion*, and *L'Apollon de Marsac*.

*L'Apollon de Marsac* was a new one-act play by Giraudoux. The manuscript had arrived a little more than a month before the production. Giraudoux had surprised Jouvét with a telephone call from Lausanne, where he was stopping on a lecture tour, to tell him about his new play which he had sent him by mail. *L'Apollon de Marsac* arrived on May 13, and there was a note in it from Giraudoux.

Dear Jouvét, dear Louis:

Find the name of Apollon yourself. See you soon. I am working hard for you. *Sodome and Gomorrhe* is finished, *La Folle de Chaillot* will be ready upon your return. All of us are thinking of you, of all of you, with affection, we await your return. Jean.<sup>13</sup>

Jouvét always looked forward to the production of a new Giraudoux play with pleasure and excitement, though he knew that it would present for solution grave problems requiring long study and reflection.

*L'Apollon de Marsac* tells the story of a young girl trying to find a place in the world. The curtains part on the light and airy waiting room of an office. On both sides, facing the audience, there are square and semitransparent doors. The scene induces a grave and expectant mood.

The attention and silence of the audience were so intense, so unaccustomed in our experience, that we were suddenly frightened. How could we not have taken such a reception for a sign of coldness, for painful reproach?<sup>14</sup>

But, contrary to Jovet's fears, the audience was captivated by the play and the performance and applauded enthusiastically at the end.

Three days later, in Rio de Janeiro, Jovet produced Paul Claudel's *L'Annonce Faite à Marie*, himself playing the important role of Anne Vercors. This play was highly successful. In spite of these successes during the second season, Jovet had still been hard put to it to pay his expenses and was now running into debt. He hoped to liquidate the debts during the course of his tour to São Paulo.

But when Jovet's company arrived at São Paulo, it discovered to its consternation that a transportation strike was paralyzing traffic, and that the city itself had been stricken with a grave influenza epidemic. People were staying away from the theatres and from all public places in so far as it was possible. In Buenos Aires the troupe ran into a similar situation. What made it particularly distressing was that the South American governments had reneged on their promises to defray the expenses of the tour. Now it appeared that Jovet would never complete the season.<sup>15</sup>

To make matters worse, tragic in fact, on September 1, 1942 just before a performance of *L'Ecole des Femmes*, the theatre caught on fire. Jovet arrived at eight o'clock to prepare for the nine o'clock performance; suddenly his stage manager, René Besson, burst in on him with the news that the theatre was on fire, and Jovet opening the doors leading to the stage,

saw a crackling mass of flame rolling toward him. Fortunately, the cast had not yet arrived.<sup>16</sup>

The fire caused serious material loss by destroying the sets for *L'Ecole des Femmes* (sets especially constructed for the tour), *L'Annonce Faite à Marie*, *Judith*, *L'Apollon de Marsac*, and some of the sets for *Tessa*.<sup>17</sup> Only the costumes of *L'Ecole des Femmes* and a few trifles escaped destruction.<sup>18</sup>

Jouvet was profoundly saddened by the accident. But he was too pressed for time to brood over this chain of misfortunes. He pulled himself together and continued his hard work. Had he not possessed this elastic disposition, a serious depression of mind might have overtaken him. But work, physical as well as mental, was always a restorative for Jouvet. He assisted his mechanics and carpenters in the construction of new décors and, to obtain some cash for his unhappy actors, gave several successful poetic matinees. Then, from a wholly unexpected source a helping hand was held out; a well-known Argentinian actor offered to raise money to defray the cost of Jouvet's new décor by giving a benefit performance. But, unfortunately, obstacles prevented this, and the generous act was never realized. But by then the Association France-Amérique had heard about the troupe's critical financial situation and presented Jouvet with a gift of 500 pesos.<sup>19</sup>

Although the construction of new sets had been started soon after the fire, they could not be completed by the deadline set for the company to resume its tour. Despite this, the troupe, now in a healthier frame of mind, went to Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Santa Fé, not to perform, but to give poetic matinees. Before its departure for Montevideo, the company once again produced at the Alvear Palace *L'Annonce Faite à Marie*, the décor having just been completed.

Jouvet's troupe was greeted with enthusiasm everywhere; and yet, though attendance was satisfactory, expenses were high. In consequence, the receipts for the season fell considerably below the receipts of the previous season, and at the tour's



end, Jouvét's funds were so low that he did not know how he would manage to return to Buenos Aires. However, a lucky turn again came to his rescue. He wrote that

A compatriot helps us and cheers us up. He manages the largest hotel in Buenos Aires. He talks about France. He talks to me with enthusiasm about the theatre and its importance.<sup>20</sup>

His friends in South America, realizing the still desperate plight of the troupe, advised him to go to Chile, where, they felt, he certainly would be successful financially. En route, however, the company again met misfortune: one of the trucks carrying the scenery and theatrical equipment fell into a ravine. The company finally crossed the Andes, however, without further incident.

On November 19, Jouvét opened in Santiago at the Theatre Municipal. There they played to houses filled to capacity and at the final performance, the Chileans, carried away by the troupe's brilliant acting, rose in a body, and sang the *Marseillaise*. Greatly moved by this demonstration, Jouvét wrote, "This is what Chile is like."<sup>21</sup>

The company then performed at Vina Del Mar, and from December 14 to 27, it tarried, awaiting the arrival of the freighter *Rimac*, for the trip to Lima. The freighter, equipped as a warship, had been put at Jouvét's disposal by the Peruvian government, a fine gesture of friendship and appreciation. The company arrived at Lima on January 7, 1943.

The Peruvian government carried its generosity a bit further by permitting the troupe to use the Théâtre Principal rent free. However, hard luck (but of a less severe nature) still pursued Jouvét; in Lima he was unfortunate enough to lose some of the most important members of his troupe. Madeleine Ozeray left to marry an orchestra leader, and Maurice Castel, Jacques Thiéry, Emmanuel Descalzo, and Henriette Risner-Morineau resigned from the company. This was a blow to Jouvét's pride and a breach of friendship. He never was quite able to forgive these desertions.

The troupe gave three extra performances at Lima to increase their funds. From Lima they went to Quito. No French company of actors had played in Quito since Sarah Bernhardt. Then they went to Bogotá where they had the distinction of being the first French troupe ever to perform in that city. There Jovet received news of the death of the actor Romain Bouquet, a great loss to him since Bouquet was a devoted friend with whom he had worked for over thirty years and for whom he had great affection and respect. The troupe then traveled to Medellín and there on June 11, the Colombian aviation company, Avianca, generously put a plane at Jovet's disposal to convey the troupe to Caracas.<sup>22</sup> The Caracas government paid his transportation and production expenses; it also presented him with a large subsidy, and put the Municipal Théâtre at his disposal, free of charge; his profits were to be exempt from all taxes. Jovet, now graciously received at official receptions in his honor, no longer suffered the obsession that the fates were against him.

From July 24 to August 19, the actors rested in anticipation of going to Havana, though they had not been officially invited. However, since Havana was on their route to Mexico, with which government an attractive contract had been signed, Jovet decided to stop off and give a few performances. The trip to Havana, going directly, would cost \$ 11,000; since the company did not have this sum at its disposal, Jovet found it desirable to travel indirectly, in small groups, the least expensive way. The first group left for Havana on August 8 and the last group arrived on August 20. But the stop-off at Havana proved to be unfortunate since the city was then suffering one of its greatest heat spells. In consequence, the troupe had to suspend performances there for two months. This was disheartening, and, as Jovet wrote: "The trip exhausted our resources. In order to subsist, we found an inn-keeper who generously took the risk of sharing our expenses and our box-receipts."<sup>23</sup>

Cooler weather came, and the company performed for over a month. After these performances, only \$80 remained in the treasury. This frightened Jovet; he telegraphed the Haitian government, inquiring whether it would be prepared to guarantee his company the expenses of a tour in Haiti. The government replied that it would. Feeling somewhat relieved, Jovet looked forward to the new season with renewed hope.

On December 15, the company disembarked at the long, narrow dock of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. There it performed nightly at the Theatre Rex at Port-au-Prince. The audiences were enthusiastic and receptive—so much so that Jovet's faith in the future was restored. The President of the Haitian Republic, Elie Lescot, informed Jovet in January, 1944, that

Our country is not rich, nor am I. I was able to pay the expenses of your trip thanks to your support. You generously gave up your box-receipts. They are due you. Here they are.<sup>24</sup>

The President handed Jovet a check for \$14,000.

The troupe, now feeling more optimistic, left Haiti for Mexico on a freighter which had been put at its disposal by the Mexican government. Upon Jovet's arrival in Mexico City, he was pleasantly surprised by the attractiveness of the city and its cultural richness and charm. Moreover, he was happy to find a large French colony well established in industry, banking, the restaurant business, bookshops, and with its own social clubs. The Mexicans received him in so friendly a way that he decided to keep his company there for six months.

However, he did not have long to enjoy this pleasant period. One morning, he received word that Giraudoux had passed away. This was a terrible shock and loss. His death deprived Jovet of a friend, a collaborator of genius, a gentle and understanding heart. Though almost paralyzed with sorrow, Jovet had to continue to work, act, and present a brave face to the world. The workaday routine must be followed, plans made, rehearsals held. Then, suddenly, more difficulties arose; when he was about to take his troupe to Martinique, two

members of the cast informed him that they were obliged to resign from the company to serve in the army.<sup>25</sup> Jouvet took the remaining members of the cast to Vera Cruz. From there they sailed to Fort-de-France. So after three years and eight months, the company again touched French soil, or at least the soil of a French colony. Arriving in Guadeloupe on September 29 they performed there until October 10. After a second series of performances at Fort-de-France, the weary and homesick actors finally embarked for France on December 13, 1944 on the *Sagittaire*.

When Jouvet arrived at Marseille on February 11, 1945, he saw a harbor battered and almost destroyed by aerial bombardments, but in spite of this he wrote, "When we saw the ruined quays of the Old Port, never had France seemed to us more stable or more reassuring."<sup>26</sup>

Jouvet brought back a troupe possessing great skill and poise, a group which had served excellently as ambassadors of French culture in a foreign land. Many of the actors had received cultural enrichment and valuable experience in the South American countries. Yet, if one returns to statistics (which can sometimes throw light on the human side of a situation) it is interesting to note that during the entire tour, lasting nearly four years, the company gave only 376 performances, of which fourteen were benefits. This meant fewer than 100 performances a year, including matinees. The rehearsals necessitated for these performances numbered 1,077. The company had traveled a total of 67,600 miles and had performed in fifty-four cities, covering almost all of South America, Haiti, and Cuba. Jouvet expressed the opinion that the cultural level of the South American peoples was very high. They had enjoyed his repertory, showing particular partiality for Giraudoux's plays. But the play that most delighted them was Claudel's *L'Annonce Faite à Marie*.<sup>27</sup>

Jouvet said that the South American theatres, which were modeled after the European, were for the most part well

constructed, practical, and convenient. However, the use of décor in these theatres was not always expert and too much emphasis was placed on physical equipment. It astonished South American directors to note that the French troupe could dispense with microphones and other such aids because of the clear diction of the French actors and the carrying power of their voices. The directors were astonished even more when they discovered that Jovet would not permit his actors to perform three times daily, as was apparently the practice in some South American countries. This practice, Jovet said, reduced the art of acting to prostitution.<sup>28</sup>

Among the pleasures on his return was the discovery that he had not been forgotten by the French people. He was admired more than ever because he had the fortitude to resist German proselytizing and persecution. Moreover, he had had the foresight and courage to take his troupe abroad as an ambassador of good will; and though ostensibly sponsored by the Vichy government, the troupe represented the heart and soul of Free France. It gave to the South American countries the best of French art, culture, sympathetic understanding and cooperation. Mutual benefits were derived from Jovet's visit. A country needs friends as people and individuals need friends, and Jovet made friends for France in these foreign lands.<sup>29</sup>

He was happy, on his return, to be able to say: "We left poor in hope. Here we are back, rich in new friendships, bringing back with us, as a consequence of a renewed relationship, increased prestige for our theatre."<sup>30</sup>

But Jovet was also a sadder and older man on his return. His great friend, Jean Giraudoux, had died and he would always feel the void, which no other man would ever fill. There were other sorrows: Edouard Bourdet with whom Jovet had been closely linked at the Comédie-Française had died in the aftermath of an automobile accident. Unhappily also, during these years marked by so many sorrows and disappointments, as well as triumphs, Jovet suffered in a very personal way

when he realized that he was no longer familiar with modern theatrical trends in the Parisian theatre, nor acquainted with the rising young directors such as Jean-Louis Barrault; perhaps he could never be as close to them as he had been to the directors of an older day. He realized that he must seize upon and use to the best of his abilities the fresh opportunities offered him in the post-war world. But first of all, he had to seek out new young playwrights of ability, further their interests in the theatre, and wisely and understandingly help them develop their talents, as he had with Giraudoux and others in the past. Many had been enriched by all his skills of the theatre. Could he now pass these skills on to others? Could he succeed in re-establishing himself? It came to him as a shock that instead of attracting talents to his orbit since his return, he was now looked upon as a "has-been," a man speedily going to seed. He intended with all his power to challenge that notion. As he himself wrote:

What we must find again, in the meantime, is what line of conduct to follow; the survival of our dramatic works is what matters, it is a question of continuity. This is our dramatic patrimony, the wealth and glory of which are at stake.<sup>31</sup>

## *Reconquering the Parisian Public* *1945-1947*

*There are no rules to guide one into the heart of a dramatic action and its power to move one—no rules for shaping it to its interpreters, to an audience, to all the conditions imposed on it by locality, space, time, or money—no rules for discovering the ideas, the feelings, or the sensations which a cue will receive, for associating actors and audience in the pleasure of mutual interchange, when each provides for and receives the necessary sympathy. There are no rules for discovering, in the human truth of a dramatic work, its provisional theatrical truth, for adapting it to the sensibility of an epoch or of a moment.<sup>1</sup>*

Jouvet soon came to realize that the years spent abroad had actually, despite the acclaim he had received on his return, served to make him appear as a man of the past in the French theatre.<sup>2</sup> He was not able to get back his theatre until the fall of 1945, since the Athénée, then rented, was housing a very successful play. In the fall of 1945, installed again at the Athénée Theatre, Jouvet followed a hard daily schedule. He revived *L'Ecole des Femmes* and played to full houses. But since the play was a revival of one produced by him in 1936, its success did not wholly dissipate the doubts that had arisen concerning his ability to direct and pioneer in new plays.

Aware of this attitude, Jovet decided to produce *La Folle de Chaillot* to test his abilities and to try to recover the good will of the Parisian audiences.

His co-workers at this period noticed a more than usual frenetic anxiety in Jovet, an almost compulsive urge to labor. He often worked sixteen to eighteen hours a day at the Athénée and at several motion picture studios. Such exertions resulted in extreme hypertension, a condition further complicated by his sense of isolation occasioned, in part, by the death of Giraudoux.

His anxiety stemmed in all probability from the fact that he was no longer sure of himself. He wavered in his approach to a production because he saw so many possibilities in it. For example, after he had done a rehearsal scene to his satisfaction, he would later have misgivings about his interpretation during that same night. In the morning, he would alter the entire scene. Jovet always suffered to some extent from emotional turnabouts and indecisiveness, but never so much as now.<sup>3</sup> His tension, his wavering and sense of insecurity had increased to an alarming degree.

Jovet's realization that he was growing old and the frightening anticipation of his approaching death were added burdens to his already troubled spirit. Although only fifty-eight years old at this time, he was convinced that he had only a few years to live. So many of his dearest friends had passed away during the last few years that he knew he would soon follow them. And, as his dread of death took a stronger hold on him, he became increasingly religious, in a very personal, mystical sense. At the same time, he was driven more deeply into the refuge of the make-believe world, the theatre.

In 1942, when Jovet was in Rio de Janeiro, Giraudoux had dispatched *La Folle de Chaillot* to him. On the cover of the manuscripts, he had written prophetically: "*La Folle de Chaillot* was performed for the first time on October 17, 1945 on the stage of the Athénée Theatre by Louis Jovet." Despite



all his efforts, Jouvét did not have the play ready for production until December 19, 1945, two months and two days after Giraudoux had scheduled it. The reasons for this delay were manifold. Giraudoux, whose guidance had been so useful to Jouvét in the past, was no longer at his side to make helpful suggestions, or to encourage Jouvét to alter, cancel, or request additional speeches for the dialogue. When Giraudoux was his collaborator, both of them discussed the production from every angle. Now Jouvét was thrown completely on his own resources, and the responsibility for its success or failure was wholly his. Jouvét, as always, insisted that the actors evoke the text to create the appropriate atmosphere, just as the author had intended. If one of the actors failed in his interpretation or fell short in some way, Jouvét would frequently ask the entire cast to reanalyze the text, not cerebrally, but in a relaxed mood of receptivity. In this way the actors would again have an opportunity to capture, hold, and exteriorize the characters they were portraying and bring them to life.

In the past, Giraudoux inspired the actors by his presence; and at the same time, he guided Jouvét in his directing, in a subtle, discreet, and indirect way. It was as if there were a spiritual communication between them, though no word might be spoken. Giraudoux, his arms folded on his chest and seemingly detached, was really intensely involved in the play and often responded to the actors' dialogues with rhythmic breathing. If the tempo of his breathing was suddenly altered, it was a danger signal and Jouvét was immediately aware of it. Then, glancing at Giraudoux, he could read the criticisms and suggestions in the expression on his face.

His entire being—I felt it—was responding physically to the text, with pleasure or constraint, according to the occasion, and I, hypocritically, followed that light, almost imperceptible breathing, as one keeps one's gaze fixed on a machine for testing or measuring, this breathing full or brief, broken or undulating, that relieved or restrained breathing, sometimes suffocating and jerky, sometimes long drawn out, as if to help the actor in the amplitude of his direction and to give him strength.<sup>4</sup>

It was Giraudoux also who had given the actors the proper *souffle respiratoire*, the right tone and beat for their lines. Jouvet and Giraudoux agreed that the actor's breathing must "put oneself on a par with the poet who wrote it, by imitating his respiration which seeks to identify itself with the breath of creation."<sup>5</sup>

But now these manifold aids were gone and only now, perhaps, did Jouvet realize the full extent of his loss. As he sat alone in the orchestra watching rehearsals, he often felt a deep, aching longing for the past. What if he failed with his first new play? What would be the reaction of the critics? And the audience? His sense of isolation became even sharper, but he was determined not to be disheartened. He threw himself into his work with tireless fury.

Added to his personal struggle was the post-war struggle among dissatisfied elements in the city of Paris which he observed daily and took very much to heart. Besides, there was widespread economic distress. Prices of commodities, even of everyday necessities, were high. Inflation had also made itself felt in the theatre. Fabrics for costumes were scarce and some were unobtainable at any price. In *La Folle de Chaillot* a large outlay was necessary to costume forty-five actors. The treasury lacked sufficient funds for it. Fortunately, the Minister of Education, M. Capitant, informed of Jouvet's need for over 2,000,000 francs to stage his play, came to his rescue with a subsidy. He did this, he said, because Jouvet's production was for the public welfare.<sup>6</sup> But even this generous financial aid could not help Jouvet acquire costumes of the early twentieth century. One night, when feeling most discouraged, Jouvet confided his dilemma to a friend who at once offered a practical suggestion: advertise for early 1900 dresses and accessories. Jouvet did just this.

I am certain that among your readers, there must be some who have kept or at least know some who have kept, in their wardrobes and attics, old feminine garments of forty or fifty years ago, from 1895 to 1910; dresses

which our mothers and grandmothers wore, taffeta or silk dresses covered with laces, baubles, spangles; hats burdened with ostrich feathers and stuffed birds, artificial flowers, and stockings adorned with inlaid work, handbags, ankle boots, in short, everything which was in fashion at that period. Now then, if they would care to send me these things, they would be rendering me a great service by helping costume certain actors in Giraudoux's play. Naturally, I intend to buy these things. That they may be in bad condition is of no consequence, quite the contrary.<sup>7</sup>

The next morning, an astonishingly large number of people came to the theatre with bundles of old clothes, jewelry, fans, and other such accessories. A countess appeared among them with her entire wardrobe.<sup>8</sup> It consisted of fans, silk umbrellas, combs, gaudy diadems for evening dress at the opera, petticoats, and garters. Others brought peacock feathers, red, white and yellow plumes, fine laces, strange hats, and fancy belts.<sup>9</sup> Giraudoux, had he been alive, would have been amused by this unusual assemblage and perhaps would have used it as a theme for a play.

Actors were soon costumed and rehearsals began. As the play took shape, Jouvet was impressed by its scope and truly monumental character. Giraudoux had reached his height as a playwright with this play, and Jouvet realized anew what a blow French culture had suffered by his death. Convinced of the play's greatness, Jouvet felt more confident of its success and more sure of himself. It was now as if Giraudoux's spirit was on his side to inspire him. Although some deletions or alterations had always been made in Giraudoux's text before the first night, Jouvet found it unnecessary to change a single word in this play.<sup>10</sup>

*La Folle de Chaillot* probably grew out of a conversation which Giraudoux had had with Jouvet several months before the outbreak of the Second World War. Jouvet declared that a cast consisting mainly of old women would be a boon to a director since older actresses, if gifted, had almost always profited by their many years of experience. Giraudoux however remained indifferent to the suggestion by Jouvet that he

work on some such idea. But the memory of the conversation lingered, and Jouvet's remarks left a deeper impression on Giraudoux than he had realized. Perhaps just as important though was the fact that Giraudoux often came in contact, in a neighborhood with its own characteristic madwoman, with the Folle du Quai D'Orsay.<sup>11</sup>

Jouvet spared no expense in his effort to engage a cast that would do justice to his great work.<sup>12</sup> He succeeded in engaging such seasoned artists as Marguerite Moréno for the Madwoman of Chaillot, Raymone for the Madwoman of Saint-Sulpice, Lucienne Bogaert for the Madwoman of the Concorde, and Marguerite Mayane for the Madwoman of Passy. Jouvet played the rag-picker, and Monique Mélinand, the waitress Irma.

Jouvet's application, intelligence, and devotion to the production did not escape the observation of the cast. They watched his successful fusing into a vibrant unity the seemingly divergent elements of the play: text, music,<sup>13</sup> acting, *mise en scène*, and costumes.<sup>14</sup> While rehearsing the play, Jouvet realized more than ever that if success were to be achieved, the underlying rhythms of the author's text must be rendered implicitly. Claudel, Giraudoux, Von Hoffmanstahl, and Yeats had pioneered in restoring a poetic language to the theatre; by departing subtly from folk rhythms a delicate rhythmic music came to the audience in an easy and almost relaxed manner. The idea was to understate rather than to overstate, to suggest an atmosphere rather than to make it explicit. Sonorities were muted. There was much variety within a given range. Density of expression was created, which gave a deeper tonal significance to the text. No showiness or rhetoric, no poetic or elaborate speech was used to achieve florid effects. There were no sharp finalities or flat lines of demarcation. The impact of the new poetry, initiated by Copeau and Gémier in France, was felt by forward-looking theatrical directors, some of whom had al-

ready realized the necessity of restoring the incantatory power to the spoken word and of achieving what Baudelaire termed a "correspondance" of thought and emotion.<sup>15</sup>

In speaking the dialogue of Giraudoux's plays, the actors had to slow down the verbal pace and muffle the explosive consonants until the sound of the words slowly died out. By so doing, all the color and emotion inherent in the text stood out with a sustained clarity. Jouvet spent many concentrated hours teaching the actors how to achieve these effects. They began by scanning the lines; then, giving the words their proper tonality and altering the caesuras, they would permit the words to fade. By these means, Jouvet was able to achieve rhythmic effects which were as complex as human feelings themselves. Finally, Jouvet could say:

The work overheats, and melts in the heat of its sensations and sentiments. The obvious has disappeared. The internal life of the work is finally released; the play lives.

Staging is a birth.<sup>16</sup>

*La Folle de Chaillot* was in two spectacular acts. Christian Bérard designed the sets. Act I took place "On Francis' terrace, on Alma place," as Giraudoux had indicated in his stage directions. However, the sets for Act I were not easily created. Bérard first made many drawings of terraces which he submitted to Jouvet. Jouvet did not reject all of them, but Bérard himself later realized their inadequacy. One evening during dinner with Jouvet, Bérard said: "One cannot build a real café . . . You see, there should be something extraordinary about it. It should be the facade of a café with windows suspended from the sky."<sup>17</sup> After this remark, Bérard roughly sketched a scene on the paper table cloth. When the sketch was completed, Jouvet tore it off, pocketed it, and used it as a basis for the set in Act I.

The café stood in the center of the stage. Above it stood an apartment house, three stories high with four rows of windows, each faced with a filigree railing. Only one window stood open.

The building gave the impression of being suspended from the sky. Chairs and tables stood under the canopy and to the right was some greenery. The lighting was bright for daylight, and the season was spring.

Act II, however, had a different quality to it. It took place in "a cellar turned into an apartment in Chaillot Street. Half abandoned." Bérard and Jovet realized that in designing such a set they had to avoid the obvious and never fall into the commonplace.

Bérard was obsessed with the idea of creating a semi-fantastic setting. To prepare himself for the task, he studied the cellars of many of his friends, went to museums, and read the architectural treatises of Serlio, Palladio, and Ledoux. But in spite of his efforts, he was dissatisfied with his results. Finally, he was so distraught by the failure of his preliminary sketches that he drew any sort of set that came into his head.<sup>18</sup> From these Jovet selected one, an enormous cube with seven doors and painted walls which resembled huge stones. When this décor was completed and Bérard saw it on the stage, he was sorely disappointed. He repainted it twice and removed all the doors save one. But he still felt he had not quite hit it. In a last-minute flare of inspiration, he did away with the remaining vestiges of reality by having the painted stones removed.<sup>19</sup>

There were sharp differences between Act I and Act II. In Act II, the action took place on a circular stage, and the lighting and sets were more subtle, more shadowy. The curtains parted on an immense leprous-looking room filled with broken pieces of furniture. There were in it a rocking-chair draped in black velvet, splintered chandeliers resembling transparent stalactites, monstrous plants, a tabouret, a screen, several hangings all awry, and a turquoise clothes rack, the last lending a more luxurious note in sharp contrast with the decaying green mold on the walls. The lighting was so manipulated as to produce soft reflections on the moldy walls,

which at times made them seem draped in silk. In the center of this tremendous cellar, was a huge bed, with a red canopy suspended by a wire from the ceiling. In the rear, rather close to the ceiling, there were two small barred windows. In this cellar, the Madwoman of Chaillot, dressed in a purplish-red velvet dressing gown, received the ladies of her court.

Bérard's approach to the creation of the costumes was equally feverish and despairingly frustrating. Having looked over the old dresses and ornaments given to Jouvét, he set to work. In a fit of wild creativity, he tore off a train of one dress, a sleeve from another, a veil from a third. He ripped the stays from a corset and a taffeta umbrella and tried to fit them all together in some sort of costume.<sup>20</sup>

In Act I, the Madwoman of Chaillot wore a tremendous hat, with a pigeon on it carrying a letter in its beak. The hat was trimmed with flounces. Her dress was bedecked with false pearls, jewels, laces, and many other showy trinkets. Her face was old and heavily made up with white flour, her eyes were circled with charcoal. The effect of so many brilliant reds, greens, yellows, and purples on her dress was kaleidoscopic. In Act II, the Madwoman of Passy was dressed in white from the tips of her plumes to her high-laced boots. The Madwoman of Saint-Sulpice was decked out in black. The Madwoman of the Concorde, sitting in uncertain balance on an armchair, nervously fingered her tawdry finery, the laces and silks which had once, long ago, been created by the *haute couture*. The rest of the characters appeared in less striking colors: whites, brown, blacks, yellows, tans, ochres, all blended into the scene.<sup>21</sup>

As opening night drew near, Jouvét's anxiety increased since his entire future as a director and actor was at stake. His first production of a new work since his return from abroad had presented him with many grave difficulties to overcome. He continued to tremble in the face of the responsibility he had accepted.

Many of Jouvét's friends and acquaintances could not help wondering on that first night of December 19, 1945, whether Jouvét would have anything new to say. Perhaps Jouvét had become repetitious and dull, like Antoine after his initial contributions. Many expressed doubt as to his qualifications to direct contemporary plays with authority because of his long absence from the Parisian scene. Had he still retained his suppleness, his verve and enthusiasm? And for many others at that first night, Jouvét was but a name.<sup>22</sup>

But Jouvét's fears were allayed when, as the lights dimmed and the curtains parted, revealing the façade of the Café "Chez Francis," the audience burst into a round of applause. The décor was a success. Now Jouvét wondered how the play itself, his directing and acting would be received.<sup>23</sup>

With trepidation the rag-picker walked on stage. A hushed silence filled the house as the audience watched him, about to speak his first lines. Tenderly and firmly he began, "I found a small view of Budapest in ivory. If it is suitable to you, one sees Buda as if one were there."<sup>24</sup> As he walked about, shoulders slightly hunched, his glance turned down in a constant search for cast-away cigarette butts, his nostrils whiffing the smell (perfume to him) of ash cans, the audience was slowly caught in the grip of the play.<sup>25</sup> Jouvét felt the rising tension on the part of the audience, and he knew then that he had recaptured them, that he had never really lost them. The play fascinated the audience. The cast was superb, and Jouvét was at his best. The critics were enthusiastic, and *La Folle de Chaillot* met with complete success. Jouvét had won perhaps the most trying battle of his long career.

There were many curtain calls that night for Marguerite Moréno and Louis Jouvét. When Jouvét bent down to kiss his leading lady's hand, he pronounced the author's name, and there was another ovation. Jouvét was overwhelmed and deeply moved by the loyalty of his friends and the affection of the audience. He was, above all, grateful that his work had



been appreciated and supremely happy because he had served Giraudoux so well.

The following day, the drama critics' columns were filled with laudatory reviews of the production. Georges Huisman praised Jouvet and his opinion was echoed and re-echoed throughout Paris. René Brunswick lauded him for the care he took in making the most of the details in the play.<sup>26</sup> Jacques Mauchamps wrote that he was "almost suffocated by the true greatness of the play."<sup>27</sup> Kleber Haedens was one of the very few who reserved judgment, considering the work at times good and at other times rather tiresome.<sup>28</sup> Gabriel Marcel applauded it; as an afterthought, he wondered how *La Folle de Chaillot* would have fared in the hands of a lesser talent than Jouvet.<sup>29</sup> André Lang was so impressed that he wrote:

It is a rare moment in the history of our theatre, an evening during which everything cooperates to seduce us, give us all the mirages of evasion, without removing us from reality. I told you, Louis Jouvet is a lover. This is the source and the secret of that miracle of equilibrium which is the production of *La Folle de Chaillot*.<sup>30</sup>

Jouvet had once again recaptured his audiences; the younger generation of directors and actors accepted his leadership as had his contemporaries. And his contemporaries once again realized how gifted Jouvet was and how much integrity and devotion he brought to his profession. Thus, his dread of the crucial first night, his deep sense of insecurity, his worry lest he be passed by, all proved unwarranted and their shadows passed like a bad dream on awakening. He was heartened by a sense of release from these real and imaginary inimical forces. He had not lost his place in the French theatre, he was not being passed by, he was not being pitied.

Despite the outstanding popularity of *La Folle de Chaillot*, Jouvet abruptly terminated the run and, in a letter to Camille Demangeat, he gave his reasons for doing so:

We took off *La Folle de Chaillot* while it was still running successfully. I do not believe one should exhaust a success, a theatre must not be

distorted by a play. And what can one say about an actor who is obliged to speak the same sentences and make the same sounds for a year? What does he become? And the theatre in which one always plays the same piece? It ceases being an instrument, a 'theatre'. Nevertheless, it pains me to take it off, to leave Marguerite Moréno... for in leaving us, she was without a rudder. When she stopped acting, she also stopped living and making any effort to live.<sup>31</sup>

Many critics have called Jovet a classicist because his work bore the stamp of clarity, order, and simplicity. There was much truth in this. No matter how ambiguous parts of the text might be, Jovet generally succeeded in clarifying the underlying intent of the dialogue and presenting the play to his audiences in such a way as to produce an intelligible, orderly and highly dramatic production. This was especially true of the difficult and complicated monologue in Act I of *La Folle de Chaillot*. There, with an infinite amount of patience and reflection, he succeeded in clarifying the rich and complex lines so that they were rendered with passions and great tenderness.<sup>32</sup> He felt this was important because:

... simple and true poetry, lucid poetry, if you wish; that is to say, the kind that dispenses with the wings of lyricism, but penetrates at once to the heart of the listener—this sort of poetry is to be found at every period and suits all tastes. It requires only various kinds of interpretations and changes of color.<sup>33</sup>

It is interesting to reflect that the crystalline purity and clarity, characteristic of Jovet's best productions, usually arose out of an initial state of disorder, in which actors and directors usually found themselves. Yet in the end, a simple and clear structure emerged. As Jovet wrote:

A sentence or line in a play is, before all, a state to be attained by the actor, by such sensitivity as to make him speak that line with the same plenitude with which it was written, as though he himself were creating it. He thereby reaches the public by an incomprehensible feeling, where the intelligence no longer matters. The audience then hears the line, not in its literal sense, but with the force of creation.<sup>34</sup>

Jovet's approach to a play could be duplicated only by the very talented. It presupposes a highly poetic text and a mature and intelligent cast. Central in this approach is the human

being, the character. The action flows from one character to the other. Everything else is of secondary importance. For example, when Giraudoux decided to expand the myth about *Amphitryon* into a drama, the theme itself was not of primary importance, but the way it was handled, the style in which it was couched, was.

Jouvet drew sustenance from all of the arts, particularly from the visual and verbal arts: painting, poetry, and prose. It is not generally known that Jouvet was an inveterate reader and that he had one of the largest and most varied private libraries in the world on drama and related subjects. His several thousand books were kept under glass and carefully arranged. He would permit no one to withdraw them but himself, and he alone had a key to the bookcases. On occasion, he would show his rare editions and exquisitely bound books to close friends. As he fingered the finely tooled covers and turned the pages, he experienced more than pride in the possession of these treasures. Jouvet loved to collect books, and his library gave him a rare sense of serenity.<sup>35</sup>

Jouvet was saddened to see the French theatre sinking deeper into vulgarity, and he found it increasingly difficult to hold to his high artistic standards. Commercialism was eating into the vitals of the theatre. It always had been an evil influence, but now the high cost of producing a play gave it a much stronger grip, since only the rich, commercially minded people could afford to gamble on its financial success. Jouvet fought against this trend. He thought that the world was developing a radio and movie mentality. He realized that his sort of theatre might succumb to the continuing pressure. To keep his standard free of contemporary vulgarity, Jouvet felt it necessary to return to the past and try to link it with the present. It was paradoxical that Jouvet should believe the future of the French theatre could only be assured if it kept its roots firmly entrenched in the past, in the classical past. It was because Jouvet held so firmly to these high principles

that he was asked to assume the presidency of the Société des Historiens de Théâtre. In accepting, Jovet proclaimed that the immediate goal of the society would be to facilitate research into the history of the theatrical arts in France.<sup>36</sup> Jovet himself began working on one such research project, a history of "dramatic architecture," from its inception to the present. He would include his own interpretation of the social, dramatic, and philosophical aspects of the different schools of theatrical architecture.

Turning away for a time from these scholarly pursuits and from writing articles and delivering lectures on the theatre, Jovet began the rehearsals of a play which he had produced for the first time in Rio de Janeiro—Paul Claudel's *L'Annonce Faite à Marie*. When Claudel heard that Jovet planned to produce his play in Paris, he wrote Jovet the following letter:

My dear Jovet,

With what curiosity I am going to see and hear this *Annonce*, with the new façade you have given it, which you today brought back from the remotest regions of the Setting Sun. It is in that play, in one of the versions which preceded its definitive form, that the pilgrim Anne Vercors had come to entreat the mysterious resources of exile and of absence.

And now, thanks to you, my dear Jovet, here it is again, appearing on the French stage, under the eyes of a father who is in a state of continual imminence, the merciless hand to hand struggle between the two sisters; the merciless need of Mara, under an irresistible exigency, to have prerogative over God, victory over God, power over God, all of which awakens in the depths of a devoured being.<sup>37</sup>

During the rehearsals, Jovet taught his actors how to speak Claudel's very personal dialogue with its Biblical simplicity. His cast included a number of actors who had not taken part in the South American production. They had to master the art of "breathing the text" with the proper tonal beat, measured accents and stately gestures, in order to communicate the spirit of the Middle Ages. Jovet succeeded in creating rare combinations of tonalities and rich musical rhythms in the dialogue which subtly reflected the complex spirit of men in a period long past. By slowing up the pace of the dialogue

(in the same manner employed in *La Folle de Chaillot*) and letting the words fade out to make the most of ensuing echoes and sudden silences, Jouvét brought out all that was spiritually rewarding in this extraordinary play.

Jouvét played the part of Anne Vercors, a tall and vigorous man in his sixties, so religiously obsessed as to permit no earthly ties to stand in the way of salvation as he conceived it. Yet it was an imperfect saintliness, imperfect because so much egoism was inherent in his ruthless quest for God.

Jouvét was eminently fitted to play the role: for one thing, he himself had always been a dedicated man, and secondly, he too had recently turned to religion. For these reasons, he could feel all that Anne Vercors felt. In acting the part, Jouvét completely identified himself with the hero. During the course of his portrayal, by the depth and suggestion of his glances, he succeeded in exteriorizing the struggle being waged within him. It was a struggle between salvation and loyalty to his family. After many years, when he finally returned to his family after completing his pilgrimage, he was informed that his wife had died and that Violaine (Monique Mélinand) had been struck down by leprosy and was on the verge of death. A deep sorrow numbed him. Looking down, rigid, eyes staring, Anne Vercors was a Job-like figure to whom the mysterious ways of the Lord had been revealed.

Jouvét received high critical approval for his performance. Claude Hervin was impressed by his authority and the masterly manner in which he dominated the ensemble.<sup>38</sup> Robert Kemp was impressed by Jouvét's ability to penetrate the darker recesses of Anne Vercors' soul, a man "Firmly entrenched in his convictions, infallible exegesis of events in which he always discerns the hand of the Lord, and gushing with pardons."

Jouvét's *mise en scène* met with equal critical approval. Some scenes particularly stood out for their sheer beauty and persuasiveness: the departure of Anne Vercors from his family

(Act I, scene 3), the country folks' conversation while awaiting the king's passage in the Chevroche forest (Act III, scene 2). All of these scenes were simple, effective, and deeply felt.

The stage sets were appropriate for a play with such medieval overtones and so many contemporary psychological implications. The hand-hewn table, on which Anne Vercors broke bread with his family and his servants for the last time, was fitting. The spotlessly clean walls of the kitchen and the crude window frames helped to achieve a proper background for a play which was earthy on the one hand, and enriched with great spiritual passion and noble intentions on the other. These sets recalled the crude but beautifully organic and very human woodcuts of the early fifteenth-century Biblical themes.

For Act II, which takes place in an orchard, the lighting effects created a decidedly religious atmosphere. Act III opened the day before Christmas, in a forest where tall denuded branches were visible. It was the winter in which so many sorrowful events were to occur. But, to lessen the severity of the atmosphere, a high sun shone splendidly overhead, tenderly touching the tree branches with an aura of warmth. God's hand extended over unfortunate man. There was no attempt to adorn this stark simplicity, and again one was reminded of the same austerity of early woodcuts.

*L'Annonce faite à Marie* was such a popular success that the Parisians protested its brief run of a week. But Jouvot, following a schedule, had decided to rotate it with *Knock* and *L'Ecole des Femmes*, and he stood his ground.

Jouvot's next production was *Les Bonnes*, a one-act play by a relatively unknown author, Jean Genêt. *Les Bonnes* is a psychological study of the mental illness and morbidity of two sisters, Claire (Yvette Etiévant) and Solange (Monique Mélinand), who work for a *demi-mondaine* (Yolande Laffon) in Paris. Jean Cocteau was among the first to show an interest in Genêt's work. When in Marseille, Jouvot met Genêt and agreed to read *Les Bonnes*; he was impressed by the script,

but told Genêt that, in its present form in four acts, it was too repetitious and failed to achieve the *moment dramatique*. Genêt agreed to revise it. Following Jouvét's suggestions, he spent several months in intense work on it. Genêt finally presented Jouvét with a condensed and highly dramatic one-act play.

At first, Jouvét did not seem to find himself at home in *Les Bonnes*. He was uncertain of the correct approach; there were several alternatives and he required time to think about them. After studying a script, he would consider emphasizing one aspect of the play or another; sometimes, it was difficult to choose. This lack of a sure sense of direction was extreme in *Les Bonnes*, and so the play required three months for rehearsal.

After much experimenting with the text, Jouvét decided that he could best render it by having the actresses declaim their lines, stressing the explosive consonants and breaking up the periods of silence with sibilants. The dialogue spoken by the sisters was highly charged; by varying the pitch of their voices, while emphasizing the strident tonalities, their speeches succeeded in conveying pure venom.

Christian Bérard caricatured the "style cocotte" of the early 1900's in his décor, pointing up the saccharine sweetness and sumptuous vulgarity of Madame's bedroom, where the action takes place. Heavy drapes hang from the rococo bed; beside it hangs a large mirror, in which the characters, as they pass before it, see themselves reflected. The rugs are oppressive and the curtains stifle the atmosphere. It was a shut-in world, much like that created by Sartre in *Huis-Clos* (*No Exit*). The dresses, ornate and adorned with flounces, created by Lanvin, emphasized the hot-house atmosphere of extravagance, sheer folly, and waste. Gabriel Marcel was delighted with the brilliant and subtle evocation of evil, vulgarity, and bad taste in body and soul which Bérard realized unerringly.<sup>40</sup>

*Les Bonnes* had a mixed reception. Thierry Maulnier

thought the play was revolting in many respects, yet he regarded it as one of the most remarkable dramatic events of the past few years.<sup>41</sup> Without exaggerating the characteristic situation, it displayed a troubling knowledge of the evil in the human heart. The text was poetic as well as forceful. *L'Apollon de Marsac*, Giraudoux's one-act play which Jouvét first produced in Rio de Janeiro, was the curtain raiser for *Les Bonnes*, and was enthusiastically received.<sup>42</sup>

With nostalgic memories of Giraudoux, Jouvét brought to a close another season. Now, he could give thanks that he had been successful in winning back his audiences and arousing the enthusiasm of the critics by his brilliant productions. And he could thank Giraudoux (or Fate) for having given him the opportunity of producing some of the best plays of his generation.

After the production of *L'Apollon de Marsac*, Jouvét informed Madame Giraudoux that he would like to revive *Ondine*. But when the latter learned that he had refused to give Madeleine Ozeray the role of *Ondine*, which had been expressly created for her, she expressed her annoyance with him, and it was even rumored that she would refuse permission for the revival unless Jouvét complied with her request. However, on May 7, 1949, she announced that she looked forward to a revival of *Ondine*, because she and her son, a former M.R.P. deputy, could use the royalties derived from it—a sensible gesture, marred by a tactless remark.<sup>43</sup>

While in the midst of his plans for the new season, Jouvét and his company were asked to represent France at the Edinburgh International Festival of Music and Drama. From the 8th of September, 1947, to the 13th, the company gave performances of *L'Ecole des Femmes* and *Ondine* at the Festival. These plays were very favorably received.

Upon his return to Paris, Jouvét continued rehearsals for his new season and also found time to act in a movie which was to become rather popular, *Quai des Orfèvres*.<sup>44</sup> Jouvét



felt spiritually lost in the movie world, and he considered it an immature art form. Reporters, who now kept at his heels, would frequently ask him such questions as, whether he preferred to act in the movies or in the theatre, a question, Jovet said, which was both complicated and absurd.<sup>45</sup> He always held the movies to be a new art form, an off-shoot of the theatre. But he would add that the main root, that is, the theatre, was still very much alive. However, the movies had not yet shown that they could survive unsupported and unstimulated by the theatre and related arts.<sup>46</sup>

The actor, on stage, has an eminent position being instrument and instrumentalist, violin and virtuoso, playing by himself and controlling himself, being his own music, and holding suspect the echo of this music among those people who are watching him, breathing to his rhythm.<sup>47</sup>

Faced with the manifold mysteries of life, its struggles and complexities, man invented the theatre to mirror his world. For Jovet, the theatre brought to focus and gave significance to all that he had felt and experienced in life, whether in happy or sad times.

Everything is amplified here, awakens questioning, reaches the depth of the conscience and the sensitivity, gives a sort of presence, which daily life contradicts and extinguishes, a state preliminary to a superior state.<sup>48</sup>

For this reason, the theatre was sheer joy for Jovet, the joy of participating in a world of magic and in acting a strange role which became for him another self, the joy of living in a perpetual struggle, and the joy of creating. All of this make-believe gave Jovet a better sense of balance, no matter how many disappointments humbled him.

The pleasure of being there, enjoying the spot and the artificial and grotesque performances, the preparation of these ceremonies, one should discover its causes, its reasons. One should inquire into one's vocation.<sup>49</sup>

The theatre also met man's desire for evasion and his constant need to resolve his conflicts in a dream.

This distortion, this vice of the mind and sensitivity, is first a distaste for an aspect, for a side of life and of what it consists, a need to turn away from it and flee from it.<sup>50</sup>

It was on the stage that Jovet recaptured the world his

grandmother had created for him, a world peopled with brigands and pirates, friendly and unfriendly spirits, and vague things foreshadowing evil or the course of the mysterious. It was in the theatre that his childhood became one with his maturity. Here truly the man becomes the child again. As Jouvét said:

I should never tire of talking about it, the marvelous nights, so brief, during which one lives in a state of intoxication which fatigue increases in a kind of trance which mounts with your impatience as the moment grows closer, and the dread of not having finished... One is a little hallucinated, rather drowsy, and if one thinks of that later hour, of its exigencies, of the performance, one suddenly falls into an ecstatic state in which the play is already seen unfolding before one's eyes.<sup>51</sup>

## *Jouvet and Molière*

### *1947-1951*

*I am speaking to someone for whom I feel affection, whose amity I need in order to give me confidence, to encourage me to speak out by confiding, to get close to the turmoil within me, to the stammering, to reach these ideas. If I have to search for these ideas all by myself, without an intermediary, I shall never succeed.<sup>1</sup>*

Many French actors such as Got, Silvain, Worms, Guitry, Coquelin, Copeau, and Dullin found their highest inspiration in the plays of Molière. They brought to life, with a lusty verve, *Alceste*, *Tartuffe*, *Sganarelle*, and *Dom Juan*. Jouvet's name was now to be added to the list.

Jouvet's return to the classical theatre was due in part to his increasing dissatisfaction with the works of contemporary playwrights. He pointed out the limiting and rather mechanical nature of the modern theatre by comparing its stage directions with those of the classical theatre. The seventeenth-century playwrights wrote very few, if any, stage directions in the text, and rarely gave any indication as to how certain lines were to be spoken. Whether the actor was to deliver his

lines with passion, irony, or anger was left entirely to him. When, in *Andromaque*, Hermione said: "My Lord, with this confession devoid of all artifices . . ." Racine felt no need to describe Hermione's emotional state at this particular moment, since the lines themselves indicated it. This left the performer a wider scope for the interpretation of his part, unimpeded by any restrictions or qualifications.<sup>2</sup>

The classical writers were also very brief in describing stage settings, leaving the director full scope. For *Dom Juan*, Molière simply wrote that the action takes place in Sicily. In *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare wrote that Vienna was the locale. Many modern playwrights, on the other hand, are precise and detailed in their description of stage sets. Jouvét was inclined to believe this was because they felt the insufficiency of their lines which had to be bolstered with suggestive notations. As an example of the inability of the text to suggest the emotions expressed, one can point to *Je Vivrai un Grand Amour* by Stève Passeur. Here one finds the following descriptions of Claude's character: discretely strange; in a repressed rage; wild but disinclined to hurt her; trying to humiliate her in order to avenge himself on her perspicacity. Jouvét found this type of description unnecessary, limiting, and verging on the ridiculous.<sup>3</sup>

Although Jouvét had already successfully produced *L'École des Femmes* and, under Copeau's direction, had acted in *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, *Le Misanthrope*, *L'Avare*, *La Jalousie du Barbouillé*, *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, and *L'Amour Médecin*, he was now determined to produce the two most controversial of Molière's plays: *Dom Juan* and *Tartuffe*.

Jouvét was ripe for the attempt. He was at his peak in the understanding of Molière, and his approach to these two plays was to be quite different from that of any of his predecessors. He not only felt a close kinship to Molière, but also a physical identification with Arnolphe and Tartuffe while performing in their roles.<sup>4</sup> Jouvét termed this rapport the

*surnaturel dramatique*. At the moment when the actor, as he puts it,

... is going to fulfill the same function, to perform the same celebration, his heart suspended in a state of intoxication, which the rising of the curtains intensifies still more, the actor has attained a state of grace.<sup>5</sup>

Molière's eternally fascinating creations all suffer the delusions and the conflicts inherent in humanity. There is Sganarelle, who imagines himself to be a cuckold; Argan, who believes he is sick; Arnolphe and his fatuous ideas of conjugal perfection; Alceste and his conception of virtue; M. Jourdain and Georges Dandin who fancy themselves as *gentil-hommes*; Armande, trying to escape the crude materialism of bourgeois society; Orgon, the naïve; Dom Juan, the atheist and seducer. And there are a host of others: malicious valets, pompous doctors, outspoken soubrettes, religious hypocrites, misers, all conceived in the brain of a playwright who conjured up for his audiences a varied, egoistical, embattled world similar to their own.<sup>6</sup>

Molière's characters, unlike Mauriac's for instance, follow their spontaneous impulses, exposing their rich store at once, of folly, wisdom, ambition, and love—and always with high spirits. Even the words of caution addressed to Cléante, Elmire, Chrysalde, and Dorine cannot prevent them from being duped by their extravagant dreams.

And yet Molière was fond of his characters; the more powerful their delusions, the more indulgent he was of them. Since Molière so thoroughly understood and so tenderly loved his heroes, it was incumbent upon any comedian to approach the part in a spirit of sympathy and understanding.<sup>7</sup>

For Molière, the theatre was an act of love, a way of entertaining and an evasion; above all, it was the art of giving oneself.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, his works were "the message, the release from an internal condition." Writing for Molière was "a way of fleeing life, of amplifying it even, by mocking it." It was also a means of establishing a bond between men, "a sym-

pathetic and friendly spot; a communion.”<sup>9</sup> And similarly for the actor. The theatre fulfills the need

the author has of freeing himself of something which obsesses him, which he carries within himself; the actor, too, needs to communicate to others what he has taken in; and the audience needs to experience something which everyday life does not grant them, which in itself is harmless, and in which they can participate with all their heart, even with their whole body, if one may say so, without feeling any change or alteration. It is an exercise without physical effort.<sup>10</sup>

The essence of the theatre is in itself inexplicable; nonetheless, philosophers have often attempted to explain it. For more than a century before Jouvét's time, scholars and men of the theatre had discussed the validity of Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le Comédien*. Diderot argued that an actor must necessarily be a dual personality; further, that great actors dominate their emotions when acting, whereas the lesser ones do not, and the very sensitive ones permit themselves to be submerged by them. But a dualism, Jouvét wrote, exists in all men; therefore Diderot's paradox is pointless and merely adds confusion to the matter instead of clarifying it. "Would to heaven that Diderot, abandoning his theories and his sentimentality, had himself experienced the duality necessary and natural to an author when he wrote his plays."<sup>11</sup>

The theatre lives only during the unfolding of the action and during those rare *moments dramatique*. Had Diderot and others before him, such as Aristotle, been sufficiently receptive during a performance to lose themselves in the action, their philosophy would have been less arbitrary, less pretentious. Neither author, actor, nor even the audience is in a position to analyze a play during its unfolding. In order to effect a real communion, one must lose one's conscious self in the drama and gain in this profound experience a sense of being more than an isolated person. This is almost a religious act which the drama fortifies. To quote Rimbaud: when this emotion is experienced, the "I" is another." Since all that precedes or follows the *moment drama-*

*tique* is not theatre, and since the emotional involvement in the dramatic act permits no objective analysis, the conclusions arrived at by philosophers are generally found to be wanting. The cerebral act of analysis excludes them from participation.

The mysterious nature of the dramatic act presented such a challenge to Jouvet that often, while directing a play, he tried to analyze objectively the emotions which the text aroused; but as soon as he resorted to reflection, he was no longer fully swept up in the action and no longer sufficiently receptive to experience the communion; therefore his analysis was futile. "Here anything which has to do with the senses must be closely examined by the mind, and the mind, in this case, cannot dispense with the sensations and the body."<sup>12</sup>

When a sensitive spectator is absorbed by the conflicts of a living phantom, "that struts and frets his hour upon the stage", he identifies himself with one or more of them, and for him they mirror his personality as it is, as it might be, or as it should be. During the period of the identification, he amplifies, in an ideal sense, his most personal dreams. In Molière's case, the characters are so fully drawn and so many sided, that they may undergo different interpretations by directors and still remain essentially themselves.

Balzac, for example, had a passion for the theatre which pursued him during his entire life; but he failed completely to become the second Molière he had hoped to be.<sup>13</sup> After having finished *Eugénie Grandet*, he wrote to Mme Hanska saying, "Molière created avarices but I made a miser of old Grandet."<sup>14</sup> The novelist creates and sustains a character with many attendant explanations and descriptions. In the theatre, however, the phantom must walk alone, presenting himself as he is in his speeches and behavior. The drama derives from the dialogue itself, without commentary. Certainly, many of Balzac's novels, such as *La Rabouilleuse* or *Le Colonel Chabert* were successfully dramatized, but two hundred novels could

be derived from Racine's *Andromaque* or *Phèdre*. Why is this the case? Because the novelist's creations are limited, unchangeable, and they lack the mobility and infinite variety which a Tartuffe or Dom Juan possesses. When an imaginative actor interprets one of Molière's characters, he may portray him in one of several aspects, depending on what essentials he wants to seize on and bring into relief. He can, without altering a line, accompany Harpagon's monologue in *L'Avare* with tears, grimaces, sobs, and many varying gestures; or he may take quite another approach without tears or grimaces. But Balzac's description of old Grandet, with its abundance of detail, while extraordinary indeed, eternally fixes that character; in this sense, then, it is limited and inflexible.

In the theatre nothing is fixed; all is in a constant flow. Even the mechanical and technical aids often undergo change with each new interpretation. Time and epochs change; so do moods, fashions, and the like; thus the sentiments evoked by certain words and phrases with which the playwright endows his characters may be somewhat foreign to the next generation. Nothing ever remains the same, and the play dies to be reborn again in a different guise to satisfy the taste of each generation.<sup>15</sup> We might call the art of acting, Jouvot remarked, the art of translating words into sensations. And although each generation may feel that it has solved the enigma which Molière's plays present to directors, it was Jouvot's opinion that his plays remain today as impenetrable, as vivid, and as varied as nature itself. "Impenetrable, irreducible, they retain their perpetual virtue of solicitation, of meditation and of diversion for the human mind."<sup>16</sup>

Because Molière was rich and satisfying in so many ways, and so broad in his scope and understanding, Jouvot was attracted to him more than ever. With a spirit of curiosity, of kinship as well as of love, Jouvot set out to create, on December 24, 1947, a totally new and original *Dom Juan*.

When the play was first produced in 1665, Molière per-



formed the role of Sganarelle, and Lagrange that of Dom Juan. However, soon after the premières, further performances of the play had to be abandoned because of objections by the Church. Four years after Molière's death, the fashionable poet, Thomas Corneille, who paid fifty livres for the rights to the play, turned the dialogue into verse. This new adaptation was performed until 1847. So, for almost two centuries, this version was the only one audiences ever saw. The Comédie-Française, which had produced the play over 500 times from 1677 to 1847, never revealed any curiosity about the original *Dom Juan*, or manifested any desire to produce it.

In 1841, Robert Kemp, actor and codirector of the Odéon, was the first to show any interest in Molière's version of *Dom Juan*. But six years passed before his dream of reviving it could be fulfilled. On the 15th of January 1847, the sixteenth performance of this seventeenth-century play was given, 182 years after its inception. Now, strange as it may seem, from this time until 1947, *Dom Juan* had been performed only 100 times, whereas *Tartuffe* had been performed over 2,500 times.<sup>17</sup>

Jouvet, haunted many years by the character of Dom Juan,<sup>18</sup> felt he could offer an interesting and highly original interpretation of it. But, as he wrote,

It is hard to judge a play which has possessed you for a long time and in which one lives, hard to tell what sensations touch upon the interpreter.<sup>19</sup> He had confided his conception of *Dom Juan* to Christian Bérard, and for years the two had often discussed various methods of approach.<sup>20</sup> Seemingly, Jouvet was going counter to his own principles in pushing his analysis of the play too far, and therefore, according to his own confession, he failed to penetrate the character. Only after he had abandoned the sterile intellectual approach in favor of the intuitive, permitting his sensations to guide him, could he understand the whole of Dom Juan's personality in all its complexities, and penetrate his soul; then a coherent, rounded personality pre-

sented itself, with all the nuances of a Velasquez painting.

Jouvet maintained that *Dom Juan* was not the author's confession, nor was it a psychological study of a seducer or of an atheist. What interested him in *Dom Juan* was not merely the *caractère* of the play, but the dramatic action taken as a whole. The characters were subordinate to this unified conception, and the play was not a vehicle for the exploitation of any one character.<sup>21</sup>

When Jouvet decided to produce *Dom Juan*, he made up his mind to dissociate the drama from all the old traditional romantic appendages, the balmy moonlight nights, the sighs and tears and the tenderness of the hero which generations of audiences had witnessed. More boldly, Jouvet stated that Molière's *Dom Juan* was a seducer who had seduced no one.<sup>22</sup>

To bring out the seductive nature of *Dom Juan*, he declared that two scenes would suffice. And even those two scenes do not offer proof of the hero's persuasive charms, since the peasant girls he conquers, Mathurine and Charlotte, have already been impressed by such unromantic features as his wealth and nobility before they have even set eyes on him.

For Jouvet, *Dom Juan* is a troubled man vis-a-vis his destiny; he is an adventurer who has broken all the rules and taken all the chances, even the supreme risk of tempting God and fate.<sup>23</sup> When Jouvet walked on stage in his black tights on that first night, he looked sombre, enigmatic, haunted and yet endowed with a compelling sensuousness. But the sensuousness was not the side Jouvet wanted particularly to stress. *Dom Juan* was no longer the man coveted by women, but a man who walked alone, too independent and corrosively intelligent to submit to the dictates of either God or man, except toward the end, when God deals out a horrible punishment to him.<sup>24</sup>

Jouvet's *Dom Juan* hated the social hypocrisies of his contemporaries; but he was haughty in his revolt against them, and thereby he cast out good with evil, faith with bigotry,

true morals with false, Elvire with love which enchains. Yet, when face to face with the Commander and confronted with an agonizing death, he revealed his weaknesses; he was a trapped and timorous fellow at bottom.

Jouvet played his hero with an underlying anxiety that would have befitted a deeply religious hero. He was convinced that Dom Juan was actually a believer in God; but certain painful situations in his youth, obscure in source, had provoked a rebellion against God and man; that was why he constantly denied the existence of a deity. Had Dom Juan been a true atheist, Jouvet maintained, he would not have constantly denied a God who did not exist, nor taken the trouble to frighten his valet Sganarelle by defying the Commander, nor would he have behaved cynically when Dona Elvire warned him of his imminent death.<sup>25</sup> He was not denying God, but running away from him. This approach to Dom Juan was complex, modern, and, one might say, psychoanalytical. To portray the deeply troubled man, Jouvet made expert use of facial expressions. His glaring aquamarine eyes constantly changed in expression, reflecting, at times, the haughtiness of a Spanish nobleman, and at others, the fear of a hunted man filled with doubt and groping for the tangible, constantly angered by the pettiness of life, and frightened by his own impotency. As Francis Ambrière stated: "So intimate a union between the actor and his part is a phenomenon rarely observed in each generation."<sup>26</sup>

In Act III, when Jouvet-Juan met his angry father, he spoke with restraint, though seething within, and wore an air of boredom and subtle insolence.<sup>27</sup> When M. Dimanche, the debt-collector, and the abandoned wife, Dona Elvire, arrived, he greeted them with an icy calm which made more obvious his profound annoyance and impatience. His implacable looks as he took slow circulatory steps around Elvire, his derisive laughs in the beggar and peasant scenes (Act III, scene 2, and Act II, scene 4), and all his mannerisms served to dramatize the

struggle going on, under the cover of his poses, between his several conflicting selves.

Juan is satanic, sadistic almost, in proclaiming his independence from all ties. He is vainglorious in self-approration. He is sovereign and unrestrained in the presence of Charlotte and Mathurine, but disdainful in Sganarelle's presence. But when confronted by supernatural forces, as in Act V, he readily realizes his own weaknesses and his essential powerlessness. There is a perceptible tremor in his voice, timidity in his gestures, a trembling of the hand. Juan reveals himself to be basically a very frightened man. Madame Dussane voiced her astonishment in this new portrayal of Dom Juan, for it was unexpected. And yet,

If Don Juan trembled it is because he wished him to, or that he felt him trembling...

Will it please his lucidity some day to unravel that enigma... and reveal to us its secret.<sup>28</sup>

This conception of Dom Juan was derived from several sources: first of all from Jovet's knowledge of humanity (had not Jovet been a man of such broad and varied experiences with a penetrating psychological curiosity, he might have failed to probe as deeply as he did into Molière's text); secondly, from a religious experience. During the Second World War, when Jovet was far from home, he came upon the complete works of Saint François de Sales. He was deeply absorbed and fascinated by *L'Introduction à la Vie Dévote* which, in his opinion, was one of the greatest of French books. Moreover, when he reread *Dom Juan*, it dawned on him that Molière had written the role of Elvire in the same spirit in which the *Introduction à la Vie Dévote* had been written. He was so moved by this similarity that he said: "I am haunted by it each time I think of it."<sup>29</sup>

During the post-war period, Jovet also read Saint Augustine, Saint Teresa, and several other religious works; the spiritual penetrated every corner of his being. It was not the

religion his mother had taught him, nor strictly the official religion; but it had elements of both, born of a great need, the need for roots, guidance, and an established security. He could no longer recapture the carefree days of his youth, or the insouciance which had accompanied him up to a certain point. The weight and sorrows of the world were upon him. Jouvet's new conception of Dom Juan was in large measure derived from his own experiences; he, too, was now a very frightened man.

Jouvet's preoccupation with religion took the form of doing good deeds. He would go out of his way to help people, friends, acquaintances and strangers. As busy as he was, he tried to help everyone who pleaded for his aid. The members of his cast observed the change in him to a self-effacing, generous man, reaching out wherever he went toward those who needed him.

Francis Ambrière wrote that the riddle of Dom Juan's personality, which had puzzled so many throughout the centuries, had finally been solved by Jouvet.<sup>30</sup> Gabriel Marcel noted a remarkable change of pace and a variety of moods in Jouvet's acting throughout the play. Scene 3 of Act IV with M. Dimanche, fell into the frame of farce; Juan's growing rebellion toward God and man in Act V was straight drama.<sup>31</sup> And when the flames of damnation surged forth and enveloped the hero, his agonizing cry was not that of an atheist but that of an anguished and tormented being; and this was pure tragedy. Gabriel Marcel added:

One could, to tell the truth, split hairs on the question of knowing whether he was the ideal interpreter for the part of Don Juan, and I shall say frankly, that I do not think so. But he played the part with intelligence, and at the end, even, with uncommon power; and one can say that on the whole, the spirit which inspired his interpretation is excellent. He took, indeed, a position quite the opposite of all romanticism, and this is certainly what was needed.<sup>32</sup>

Jouvet also made the decision as to which sort of costumes he would wear. He requested the designer to play up the

Spanish element, which is so foreign to French audiences. Consequently, the traditional wig, laces, flounces, and high heels of a seventeenth-century nobleman were discarded.<sup>33</sup> Jouvot wore only two costumes. The first was a pair of snug-fitting black tights, black boots, and a black jacket with puffed sleeves. The costume also had frilly cuffs and a heavily starched white collar. He wore a gold-linked chain around his neck, and he appeared sometimes wearing a large, high black hat. In this costume he was a dashing figure, and he made good use of his long, shapely legs and his tall figure as Leloir had done before him. The second costume was even more splendid than the first. His tights and his jacket with its balloon sleeves were white with black spots; his boots black; his cape white in some scenes, in others black.

When Jouvot decided to produce *Dom Juan* he was faced with several difficult technical questions.<sup>34</sup> For example, there was the problem of the stone statue of the Commander which walks, talks, and nods its head. In Act IV, scene 8, the Commander sits down at the table with Juan; in Act V, scene 6, he takes Juan's hand and as Molière indicated: "A loud clap of thunder and a great splash of lightening struck Dom Juan; the earth opens and then an abyss; and great flames issue forth from the spot where he fell."<sup>35</sup>

Molière's stage indications were rather difficult to carry out. In the seventeenth century, the stage of the Palais Royal was illuminated by approximately a hundred candles, so the use of a trapdoor went unnoticed by the audience. In the semi-darkness, the marvelous and mysterious could be pointed up and imagined, thus making the job of the stage director easier. But the stage in Jouvot's time had an illumination five hundred times as bright.

The second difficulty was of another sort. When Sganarelle utters the final words after Juan's death, "Oh! my wages! My wages!"<sup>36</sup> they are to be spoken in a comic tone of voice. But his master had just died, so how could Sganarelle be so

jolly about it? Jouvet and Bérard discussed this at length and at first Jouvet thought that perhaps Sganarelle could make his speech as in a trance. But Bérard thought this would be in very poor taste. The second suggestion was to wait a brief period after Juan's death; then have Sganarelle visit his master's tomb and speak his lines.<sup>37</sup> Thus, for Act V, scene 6, the audience heard Juan's piercing cry as he was being devoured by the flames, immediately after which the curtain came down, only to rise one hundred seconds later. Sganarelle then appeared, stood in front of his master's tomb, and piously placed a wreath of flowers at the foot of it, whereafter he spoke the last lines with tolerant and amused irony.<sup>38</sup>

There were many who believed this solution to the problem to be completely distasteful. Francis Ambrière felt that this tacked on conclusion and the "modern style" wreath of flowers, which Sganarelle placed at the foot of his master's tomb, was indeed grotesque.<sup>39</sup> Paul Gaillard was so taken aback by it that he wrote that such theatrical manipulations were worthy of a Gaston Baty and not of Jouvet.<sup>40</sup>

What many failed to appreciate in this production was the expressive and fresh rhythm in which the dialogue was spoken. In Act I, for example, Jouvet delivered his tirade on love in a quick and sing-song manner. Gabriel Marcel felt that he should have spoken in a slower, more voluptuous, and insinuating manner. But upon reflection, he realized that Jouvet had been correct in his approach, since Sganarelle, after hearing his master speak, said: "Bless me, now you gabble. It seems to me that you learned that by heart and you speak exactly like a book."<sup>41</sup>

The tempo of the play should be very rapid, Jouvet maintained. It was just this extreme elasticity of the production, this incomparable *brio*, which vitalized the performance and distinguished it from its predecessors.<sup>42</sup>

But more important than anything else, in Jouvet's opinion, was the maintenance of a continuity of action in a unified

framework. Moreover, the marvelous and the unbelievable elements in the play, which Jouvét underscored, had to be made credible. He felt that the productions of his predecessors were actually flagrant betrayals of Molière's intentions, for "In the director's profession, what is most difficult is to forget all of this, to attack a play with an open mind and not to know everything that was said and written about it."<sup>43</sup> Jouvét gave the play a dramatic unity.

The décors, created by Bérard, again proved his worth and won the hearty approval of the critics. The fixed set consisted of a three-story arcaded structure which looked like the nave of a church. By the clever placing of objects in front of and behind these arcades, Jouvét achieved the atmosphere called for by Molière.

For Act I, Bérard placed boats, water, and sundry other objects behind the arcades. The bright lights shining on the blue background of the sky, as seen through the arcades, situated not only the scene, but the season as well. Act III represented a forest. Four large trees stood in front of the fixed set, and several in the rear of it. In addition, Spanish moss was gracefully draped from the top of the stage. Act IV took place in Juan's luxurious apartment. To lend this scene enchantment, Bérard placed candlesticks, each holding five candles, on the second and third stories of the arcades. The open areas of the arcades were now filled in with black. On the stage itself a framework of doors had been built, covered over with heavy and colorful drapes, thus lending a note of luxury. During the dinner scene in Act IV, a table stood in the center of the stage and the drapes in the rear were drawn. Act V took place in the country. After the hero had died, his tomb appeared in the center of a stage lit by chandeliers.<sup>44</sup>

The colors were as effective as the architectural design. The grays, blacks, dark greens, blues, chrome colors, mother of pearl, and the beige, gave an unusually varied and luxurious



tone to the scene. Jouvet said of Bérard, "I hardly know any dramatist who is his equal and who is, by virtue of his spectacular secrets of theatrical creation, more intimately approaching Molière."<sup>45</sup>

Francis Ambrière wrote of the production as a whole:

Not one of his plays impressed me, at this point, with its effectiveness as dramatic art, considered as a means of expressing the highest human anxieties. By finally breathing life into Molière's masterpiece, after waiting almost three centuries, Louis Jouvet gave us something close to a masterpiece as actor and director.<sup>46</sup>

*Dom Juan* was still attracting large audiences when Jouvet decided to terminate its run and set out on another strenuous tour. He was sponsored by the French Cultural Services and by the foreign countries he visited. An odd incident occurred in Egypt.<sup>47</sup> The Egyptian press suddenly burst out with charges that Jouvet was an enemy of their people. The reason? Doctor Ycouv Khouri, delegate to Paris for the High Arab Commission, had accused Jouvet of being a member of a most dangerous Zionist group. The newspaper, *Al Ikhwan al Mouslem-in*, published a similar statement and a second newspaper, *Al Kolta*, informed its readers that Jouvet was also a member of an association sworn to free Palestine. The newspapers also voiced their disapproval of the Egyptian government for harboring so dangerous a man.<sup>48</sup> Jouvet, who had always refrained from joining any political organization, was astounded by these accusations and replied to the press as follows: "My troupe includes only French Catholics!"<sup>49</sup> No one seemed to know from what source these completely unfounded rumors had arisen. They attest perhaps to people's jittery and easily inflamed state of mind. But in due time the rumors died down and the accusations ceased.

On May 1, Jouvet and his company arrived in Italy. In Florence, in Venice, and in Milan, they again played to enthusiastic audiences. From Italy they went to Strasbourg and then to Poland, performing in Warsaw and in Cracow. In Poland, Jouvet and Renoir both commented on the ideological

trends of its theatre, which dealt with social aspects of the contemporary scene.<sup>50</sup> In Czechoslovakia they performed in three cities: Moravia-Ostrava, Bratislava, and Prague. They were delighted to discover that the Czechs were interested in the foreign theatre. In Bratislava, Jovet, accompanied by Renoir, went to a performance of *L'Ecole des Femmes* produced by a young theatrical director. The following evening, the Czech came to see the French version. After the performance, he said to Jovet: "Thanks to you, tonight Molière gave us, at the same time, both *The School for Wives* and the school for actors."<sup>51</sup>

They played in Vienna, Munich, Stuttgart, Nuremberg, and Baden-Baden, and, on June 25, returned to Paris. The tour had lasted three and a half months. Jovet was pleased because

The enthusiastic reception which was accorded us everywhere proves not only the merits of the actors, but, even more, the avidity of the audiences for everything which is theatre, and *our* theatre, as well as the quality of the merchandise, if I may venture to say so, which we give them. We have been struck, moreover, in those countries distracted by anxieties and new ideologies, by the loyalty to French dramatic literature. After a lapse in theatrical productions which lasted during the entire Occupation, some peoples are building new theatres in the destroyed cities with courageous haste. And French plays are being given almost everywhere.<sup>52</sup>

Shortly after his return, Jovet began directing *Les Fourberies de Scapin* for the Jean-Louis Barrault company at the Théâtre Marigny. As may be recalled, Jovet had played the part of Géronte in 1917, in Copeau's production of the play at the Vieux-Colombier. This time, however, Jovet directed the play and did not act in it.

In Jovet's opinion, *Les Fourberies de Scapin* resembled a Bach fugue, so perfectly was it integrated. For this reason, perhaps, it was one of the most difficult of Molière's plays to produce. Each detail had to be fitted into the others, as the play unfolded, and a strict unity had to be preserved throughout.<sup>53</sup> When Stanislavsky produced *Les Fourberies de Scapin* his scene was solid and naturalistic: cargo boats lay at

anchor and on the dock lay many stacks of flowers. Jouvet felt that this sort of realism could no longer be effective in suggesting all of the implications of the play as he saw them.

Jouvet conceived Scapin to be a lazy but comic knave, who, armed with many startling tricks, finally carried them too far, and was caught in his own snares. He strove to bring into bold relief the joyous quality inherent in the text, and he speeded up the pace with a somewhat staccato rhythm to give the comedy a light and spirited action.<sup>54</sup>

Bérard had been so successful in designing appropriate sets for the other Molière productions that Jouvet again called upon him to design the sets *Les Fourberies de Scapin*. Bérard used a fixed décor on which the acting could take place on several different planes. His greenish-gray set, touched with red, yellow, blue, and black, was a somewhat bridge-like structure, with a center underpass and stairs on either side.

As the curtains parted on this muted décor, the stage suddenly filled with lights, and Scapin burst on stage spinning, bouncing, gliding, leaping, as would have done an actor of the *commedia dell'arte*. As Raymond Cogniat wrote: "Louis Jouvet so well understood the close relationship of this convention, that the intermissions were replaced by short divertissements, half mimed and half danced."<sup>55</sup>

Pierre Brisson, however, indulged in adverse criticism:

The play unfolds on small platforms, from which one descends with snappy steps and sliding on ramps. Scapin, provided with a window washer's ladder, indulges in aerial gymnastics. Acrobats intervene, doing turns to the tune of dance-hall music... It is completely devoid of significance.<sup>56</sup>

After reading Brisson's review, Jouvet promptly replied to it.

I like your love for the theatre, I like your partiality and your indignation. Since Barbey d'Aurevilly, criticism had lost this angry vehemence, this irascible spirit, and virulent lyricism which anathematizes, damns, condemns, or strikes down the poor mountebanks that we are. I thank you and congratulate you. Your enthusiasm has always delighted me...

... Permit me then to tell you, in all modesty and simplicity, that we do not agree.

The virtue of great works is to leave us insatiable. You prove this to us.

*Les Fourberies de Scapin* leaves you famished. Jean-Louis Barrault joins me in expressing our gratitude. We would have been grieved to have surfeited you . . .

I would have been disturbed if, to justify the extremity of your sorrow, you did not give us a precise picture of the way *Les Fourberies de Scapin* should be performed, according to your conception.

We, the people of the stage and boards, we don't have any conceptions. This is the difference which separates us, and which puts us in opposition to each other.

For my part, I had no conception, no picture of the play until the curtain rose on opening night at the Marigny. And now it is too late, irremediably too late; this is the sad side of criticism, there is criticism only afterwards.

A classical play, my dear Pierre, has become for me today after many years of work of practice, a fascinating experience. It is hard and difficult to achieve this result. It demands great patience, a long "purgation".

It is best to wait for the play to enlighten itself, without recourse to any other information, other than its dialogue and lines.<sup>57</sup>

Jouvet maintained that his production was not cerebral in tone; on the contrary, such a conception would have gone counter to his aesthetic principles. He approached a play by way of his sensations and let the text slowly enter his blood until it was part of him. "The actor resembles a potter who models clay and whose sensibility is like a current at the tips of his fingers."<sup>58</sup>

About this time, more sorrows were to be added to Jouvet's already long list; several of Jouvet's closest associates passed away, one after another. During a rehearsal of *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, just six days before opening night, Bérard suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died in Jouvet's arms. His death broke one of the last links with Jouvet's early days, the days of his first trials and successes. Bérard's death affected him in such a way as to drive him still more into himself, and into religious meditation. When inactive, he suffered periods of depression and dread of what the future might bring. His sorrows drove Jouvet into increasingly feverish activity. He set to work on a new production of *Tartuffe*.<sup>59</sup> It was to be a very personal *Tartuffe* as *Dom Juan* had been; for, once again, Jouvet sought to identify himself with a controversial character, seeing himself in it, for good or evil.

The role of Tartuffe had been interpreted in various ways, but in general, it may be said that he was presented as a red-faced, fat, and sensuous man.

Stout, fat, fair, rosy-lipped . . .  
 He supped alone, before her,  
 And unctuously ate up two partridges,  
 As well as half a leg o'mutton, deviled.<sup>60</sup>

Jouvet's Tartuffe was to be entirely different. He was a tall and stately man, pale and thin, thoughtful, cold, calm, and well-mannered. He was self-controlled, self-aware. Jouvet studied his every gesture in building up the character, and projected himself into the role so completely that he in fact lost himself in the part.

Jouvet thought of Tartuffe as an attractive man, for if not, he argued, would the rich bourgeois, Orgon, have taken him into his home? Moreover, if Tartuffe had been a dirty, ugly fellow, would Elmire have been affected by him, flattered by his attentions? Jouvet maintained that Tartuffe had his solid good side. There are no lines in Molière's text to expose him as an impostor. His evil was never premeditated. He confessed his moral misery to Orgon after having been surprised by Damis in Act III while trying to make love to Elmire. For instance, Tartuffe says:

Alas! and though all men believe me godly,  
 The simple truth is, I'm worthless creature.<sup>61</sup>

It is significant that Orgon and not Tartuffe drove Damis from home, and that after Damis' departure, Tartuffe said that he was never going to see Elmire again; whereupon Orgon said: "No, You shall be seen together at all hours."<sup>62</sup>

Convinced that Tartuffe had been wronged by his family, Orgon said:

I'll go and make a deed of gift to you  
 Drawn in due form, of all my property.<sup>63</sup>

The problem of Tartuffe's character, as Jouvet saw it, was not whether or not he was sincere or a hypocrite,

. . .not to question, not to judge—let Tartuffe and the other characters have their responsibilities, their own life, their secret, let them "act" in

all innocence, without premeditation. Tartuffe would be a play for the Guignol theatre, if from the moment he appeared, he were—either by the actor who is playing him or the audience who is hearing him— already marked as a monster.<sup>64</sup>

When asked to elaborate his conception of Tartuffe, Jouvét said:

I do not have any ideas about Tartuffe. I do not know why the question was raised of knowing whether he was a man of the world. Others dressed him in a priest's garb, Lucien Guitry gave him an Auvergnat accent... Molière had the Congregation in view... I tried to make him live.<sup>65</sup>

There were two scenes in Jouvét's production which particularly disturbed the critics: scene 3 of Act III and scene 5 of Act IV. According to tradition, Tartuffe, when making advances to Elmire, tickled her leg constantly. Jouvét derisively called that "une tradition" and dispensed with it. Jouvét's behavior when alone with Elmire was not sensual, but dignified, and obviously fascinated by Elmire, he spoke his lines with a subtle, seductive charm. His expressive mouth and glowing eyes revealed his desire to possess her. This was excellent miming, and Jouvét's portrayal seemed all the bolder and more convincing because of its subtlety and restraint.

In scene 5 of Act IV, Elmire asked her husband to hide under the table and overhear Tartuffe making love to her. It was customary in the past to reveal Tartuffe's intentions to possess her at this point. But as interpreted by Jouvét, Tartuffe entered the room dressed in ecclesiastical garb with an air of restraint; he glanced searchingly at Elmire. His eyes particularly revealed the battle going on within him between passion and his determination to control himself so as not to betray his benefactor. He played the entire scene at a distance from Elmire. She had placed a chair between them and this was sufficient to deter Tartuffe.

Jean-Jacques Gautier felt that Jouvét's interpretation was cerebral and so lacked the spontaneity necessary to be effective.<sup>66</sup> Jacques Lemarchand felt that everything was too well regulated in the production, and that the entrances and

exits were too slow-paced. He also stressed the lack of spontaneity.<sup>67</sup> Thierry Maulnier wrote that Jouvet was too cold and calculating in his attitude toward Elmire, and since Tartuffe made no real effort to caress Elmire or even touch her, the whole series of stratagems, which she employed to forestall him (by placing objects in his path) was unnecessary and ridiculous.<sup>68</sup> However,

One will say, and one will probably be right, that this "party game" had not been foreseen by Molière, and the effectiveness of its comedy is lessened by eliminating precisely that which is coarsest, most direct, most Palais Royal. But Jouvet deserves some credit for having eliminated, in his respect for the audience, these rather vulgar indulgences which Molière authorized.<sup>69</sup>

Elsa Triolet, however, was impressed by Jouvet's interpretation.

But where Jouvet is astonishing is when Elmire plays the seduction scene while Orgon is hidden under the table: standing in the middle of the room, immobile and mute, Tartuffe receives the advances of Elmire. There he is, motionless, distrustful, weighing the words of Mrs. Orgon, pondering her sudden reversal . . . A big fish who does not dare nibble at the hook.<sup>70</sup>

Jouvet had not followed tradition in portraying a Rabelaisian Tartuffe, the hearty glutton and hypocrite, but instead had created an attractive and rather enigmatic fellow, whose haughtiness concealed his implacable ambition, restlessness, conflicting desires, and anguish. Paul Abram, although opposed to this very original interpretation, wrote: "This conception reverses many old opinions. There is no doubt that it will be passionately discussed, one can accept it or reject it. But one cannot fail to recognize its interest."<sup>71</sup>

He did not build up Tartuffe's character at the expense of the other characters or the drama itself. He sought perfect integration. However, two innovations displeased the critics. First, the choice of Gabrielle Dorziat for the role of the soubrette Dorine; secondly, the liberties Jouvet had taken in the final scene of the concluding act.

Tradition demanded that Dorine be young, gay, and solidly built. But Jouvet could find nothing in Molière's text to bear

out such a description. He looked upon her as a sort of governess. Dorine therefore was not portrayed as a charming and insolent servant, but as a rather rotund, fully mature, and yet indulgent woman.<sup>72</sup>

The second criticism was lodged at Jouvét's alleged infidelity to the text. Act V, scene 7 ended with a forty-five line speech delivered by the *exempt* (adjutant or police officer). In the monologue, Molière sought to pay a compliment to His Majesty Louis XIV. But to modern audiences, Jouvét thought, all this would be verbiage and boring. France had not had a king for more than a century and the lines had lost all significance. Instead, Jouvét planned to end the play on an ironic note. So, he pieced out the adjutant's speech among seven actors: six judges and the *exempt*. He wrote: "This final tableau merely divides a monotonous speech between several actors."<sup>73</sup> At the beginning of the *exempt's* speech, the rear wall rose and disappeared revealing six wigged judges in red velvet robes who pronounced judgement as in a court of law. Behind the judges hung a gold curtain with a large portrait of Louis XIV which was intended as an ironic note. But the critics were dismayed by this touch, and Robert Kemp, echoing a unanimous opinion wrote: "Alas I reserved the worst for the end. The grand finale!... What a nightmare! What potion did dear Jouvét swallow."<sup>74</sup>

Jouvét, long since accustomed to harsh criticisms, declined to defend his position in this matter.<sup>75</sup> He took heed of but did not reply to the devastating criticisms.

Madame Dussane was in total disagreement with Jouvét's conception of *Tartuffe*:

We have just found ourselves before a *Tartuffe* performed in half-tones, in a scene smacking of semi-mourning, a *Tartuffe* at whom the audience could not manage four laughs during the evening, a *Tartuffe*, let's face it, which boldly takes the point of view contrary to the author's most obvious and explicit directions in twenty places.<sup>76</sup>

Thierry Maulnier's criticism, however, was laudatory and



penetrating. He wrote that though Jouvet's production did not make one laugh,

... in exchange, he gave us something infinitely precious, the feeling that the actors are not brilliant robots, accustomed to provoking laughs and applause according to a fixed routine, with a certain number of speeches, cues, situations or exits known beforehand and determined once and for all, but living beings such as we might encounter in the grip of an incident such as we might have to experience. The feeling of warmth and of homely truth, even through comic deformation, is analogous to that produced on us by the paintings, rather conventionally classical in character, of Dutch interiors.<sup>77</sup>

A month before Jouvet opened in *Tartuffe*, on December 28, 1950, he received a letter from a young war orphan in a refugee camp at Neuilly. He asked Jouvet the following question in connection with his production of *Tartuffe*: "When you created *Tartuffe*, what was your principal concern in order to give this work the seal of your personality?"<sup>78</sup> Jouvet replied within five days.

The concern of the director, like that of the actor, should not be to stamp the work which he is producing—or in which he will act—with his personality. But rather to treat the play, or the role, objectively, that is to say, to forebear from distorting it to meet preconceived wished-for meanings, and to defy the remembrance of what had already been seen, of ready made matters and ideas.

There is a dispute and legend concerning each hero in the repertory. *Tartuffe* has especially been involved, despite himself, in polemics. Every time the Impostor appeared on stage, the actors and audience are already for or against him, have been appraised of his identity, his physical appearance, and his antecedents... Personally, I find his behavior enigmatic. It is not a question of judgment, but of feeling. At every moment during the course of the three acts that he is on stage, *Tartuffe* acts. It is difficult for the actor portraying him, if he wants to be objective, if he wants to follow the text only, without giving any other interpretation than that contained in the text, with its humanity and feeling. It is difficult, I say, to find the place, the passage where *Tartuffe* deliberately acts as an impostor.<sup>79</sup>

For several weeks before the opening of *Tartuffe*, Jouvet gave himself up to religious meditation. He also read avidly in religious and other fields.<sup>80</sup> It was not beyond him to read three or four books a day. An impelling force was driving

him into the exploration of man's soul and of his own. It was a period of religious mysticism, of meditation, and troubled spirit for Jouvot.

After twenty performances of *Tartuffe*, Jouvot left Paris with his company on a tour which lasted from February 22 until June 25. Their itinerary included Belgium, Holland, the southern part of France, Portugal, Spain, North Africa and Switzerland. There were only two plays in the repertory: *L'Ecole des Femmes* and *Knock*. The tour was highly successful. Jouvot wrote, "We played before packed houses."<sup>81</sup>

Whenever Jouvot went on tour, he observed and studied his surroundings; he analyzed people and always found something interesting and stimulating about them:

Everything alive is dramatic, everything within or outside self is dramatic, and it is the dialogue between the self and the external world which that epithet "dramatic" denotes. It is also the mystery. The dramatic is turned to account in the theatre, but it is the principle even of religious feeling.

It begins by getting hold of self (a sense of fear), intense absorption which communicates to the individual a state difficult to explain, but which deposes his self, and at the same time spurs him on to discover a sense and a real possession of his personality. One experiences a solitude difficult to obtain by oneself, and in this solitude one encounters an inhabited world, in which a new life is revealed. All of this is nothing but a chapter concerning the knowledge of self and of the circumstances which reveal the individual to himself.<sup>82</sup>

What attracted Jouvot to his religion was chiefly its intense drama and the mystery at its source. Always essentially a lonely man, he had tried to communicate his ideas and feelings to others but felt he had never fully succeeded. Jouvot found communion with religion necessary; in it he could lose himself to achieve a fuller, more knowledgeable self. It was also an outlet for his pent-up emotions. In religious meditation, he better understood himself, his conflicts and his needs. He could now relax and yield himself to those mystical forces close to his heart, in which his spirit could find comfort.

When he returned to Paris, Jouvot was an exhausted and sick man. Doctors had warned him before this that he should

not put himself under too much strain. He was well aware of this, but he was driven by a compulsion. Yet he was extremely concerned about his own condition. Sometimes, encountering his old friend Georges Duhamel on coming off-stage, he would seize his hand and place it on his heart, saying: "You who are a doctor, feel my heart!"<sup>83</sup>

Duhamel would feel the quick and uneven beat of a sick heart. But Jouvet continued to put an ever growing strain on it. On July 31, in recognition of his great achievements in the theatre, he was elevated to the rank of Commander of the Legion of Honor. During the years from 1947 to 1950, he had written numerous articles on the theatre, delivered lectures, produced plays and acted in them. Moreover, he had made eight movies in this three-year period: *Quai des Orfèvres*, *Les Amoureux sont Seuls au Monde*, *Entre Onze Heures et Minuit*, *Retour à la Vie*, *Miquette et sa Mère*, *Lady Paname*, *Knock* (second version), and *Une Histoire d'Amour*.

All the while he was seeking new plays to produce. In a letter to Michel Etcheverry, written on August 9, 1950, he remarked:

We must start work on these two plays (*Le Misanthrope—L'Avare*), not at once, but one can never ponder them sufficiently before producing them, if one wants to produce them suitably. We are going to revive *Tartuffe*, but one must have plans—one must make many plans.<sup>84</sup>

Thus we see that Jouvet planned to produce *Le Misanthrope*, *L'Avare*, and Giraudoux's last play *Pour Lucrèce*. But Madame Giraudoux, who felt this play to be her last link with her husband, refused him permission until the end of 1952. Of course, scripts were offered him daily; he would read the first few pages, rarely more; none could arouse his interest. He wanted a play of literary, philosophical, and dramatic import.

It was suggested to Jouvet that he direct Sartre's new play, *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu*. When he wavered, he was accused of a lack of interest in plays by living authors, just as he had

once been accused of a lack of interest in classical plays. Jouvét, goaded on by his friends, finally agreed to produce the play.

Before Jouvét began rehearsals of *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu* on Ash Wednesday of February, 1951, an optional mass was held for those artists who might die within the year, and prophetically enough, Jouvét chose to read the poem composed by A. Willette in June of 1914 for just such occasions.

*Ave Domine, morituri te salutant!*

Those who salute thee Lord, before dying are

Those whom thou hast created in thine own Image, to create art.

Those who have meditated upon thy work and rendered homage to thy  
Beauty!

They are the simple at heart, disdainful of diabolical gold,

They are the artists who aspire to the glory of being at thy right...

Those, Lord, salute thee before dying.

We, the artists, in the dark arena, in the glimmer of the weapons which  
thou gavest us, before multitudes who have neither eyes, nor ears, but  
who have a mouth with which to jeer us if we fail...

*Pollice versa!* we salute thee.

Lord, before dying.<sup>85</sup>

Jouvét's energy was to be taxed still further. While working on the *mise en scène* for *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu* (the play was still unfinished), the company was invited to tour in the United States and Canada. On February 22, 1951, the troupe arrived in Montreal. It performed to full houses in Montreal and Quebec. Then it went to Boston and New York, where it played at the ANTA playhouse in March, during UNESCO'S International Theatre Month.

Few people then realized that Jouvét was gravely ill. He coughed frequently while playing Arnolphe because of his weakened physical condition. Tense and constantly soaking in perspiration, he was forced to change his costume frequently, and with reason, for as Arnolphe, he was perpetual motion personified. He jitters, bounces, gyrates, mugs and wields his walking stick as a woodcutter would his axe.<sup>85</sup> During one performance, Jouvét suffered a heart attack, and in severe pain, gasped for breath, but he continued heroically to act.

When, in the garden scene, he fell into his chair, the audience was carried away by the comedy of it; only his intimate friends knew that he had hardly sufficient breath to speak his lines. After the performance, a doctor administered an opiate and warned him that his heart was in bad condition.<sup>87</sup> And yet, when asked to lecture at clubs and universities Jouvet readily complied, although he must have realized that his time was drawing to a close.

Jouvet liked American audiences. Although many did not understand a word of the play, his acting had such human appeal and such universality that American audiences remained constantly interested and vastly amused. Jouvet himself enjoyed his stay and planned to return at some future date, although he knew within himself that it was a dream which would never be fulfilled.

On his return to Paris, he began work on Sartre's play. Although he had already covered the unfinished manuscript in his possession with notes for an appropriate *mise en scène*, he still had much to do on it. *Le Diable at le Bon Dieu* was a play in three acts, requiring four hours for the performance. There were ten scenic changes, ninety costumes, and fifty actors.

From April 15 to June 7, Jouvet worked without respite. Since Sartre had not completed the script until the rehearsals were well underway, neither Jouvet nor the actors knew what the outcome would be. Moreover, Jouvet did not care too much for the play. He was too sincerely religious a man not to take affront at Sartre's expressions of atheism in it.<sup>88</sup> To speed up the pace, Jouvet asked Sartre to cut some parts and to rewrite others. Sartre refused to do any rewriting although he agreed to cut out parts if necessary. Sartre was interested in emphasizing the philosophical aspect of the play; Jouvet preferred to stress its dramatic and lyrical character. Thus the two men could never see eye to eye and this proved to be a major source of irritation to them.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, the

atmosphere during rehearsals was strained. Jovet would sit in the orchestra, chain-smoking, watching the proceedings, but rarely making comment. Sartre noticed that he would frequently take his pulse.<sup>90</sup> Maria Casarès, the feminine lead, was deeply disturbed because Jovet never offered her encouragement.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, Jovet felt frustrated because he could not work with the designer of the stage sets, Felix Labisse, in the same free and understanding manner as he had with Bérard. Therefore, during most of the rehearsals, Jovet remained detached and apparently uninterested.

But, in spite of the uncomfortable situation, he was able to integrate the vast panoramic work and give it drive and coherence. Most critics marveled at the results. On opening night, June 7, 1951, which was one of the most elegant Paris had seen in many years, success seemed assured.

Jovet now sought to cleanse himself of any sinful connection with *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu* by producing a religious play. A member of his troupe had given him a copy of Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* late in 1950. After reading this novel which touched him deeply, he was at once intent upon turning it into a play. He asked his friend Clouzot to adapt it for the stage. The play, he felt, would be the culmination of his life's work. Greene, however, did not react favorably to Clouzot's adaptation, and so Jovet called upon Pierre Bost to write a new version.

Before Jovet had left on the American tour, he had written Bost the following letter:

I am leaving for Canada and the U.S. I return on April 7. I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you before departing, and I have not the leisure to explain to you in detail what I should have liked you to do for me.

In the play I should like to recapture the atmosphere of the novel by means of richer dialogue—more urgent—in order to draw from the character a more precise picture of the successive stages in which that character appears.

One must, I believe, be partial to the novel—if one can in order to discover everything slack or static in its successive stages. It is the only possible way to present that character.<sup>92</sup>

Early in the month of August, 1951, rehearsals of *The Power and the Glory* began. Jouvet did his utmost to make it a first-rate production. The text seemed at one place incomplete, so Jouvet suggested to Pierre Bost that he smooth out the transitions between the fifth and sixth tableaux with some additional dialogue. Jouvet, always uncertain and hesitant, was now more so than ever during this period of failing health. Again he wrote: "I don't know whether my idea of adding the transitional dialogue was a good one. I don't know what I shall do . . ." <sup>93</sup>

On this same day, he wrote Pierre Renoir, informing him that he was still groping in the dark, still trying to understand the character he was to portray.

I began staging Act I—without myself as yet being able to rehearse—for as you felt—it is a difficult role and I do not know how to approach it. It is not at all the usual theatre. Aside from certain passages, the dialogue has a cold pathos, almost impossible to experience within oneself while playing it, without becoming "bombastic." I am thinking of Mérimée—I am thinking of an objective, a descriptive theatre—a melodrama in which the performance would be demonstrative without participation (what I mean is the customary participation of the actor who tries to become the character).

It seems to me that the secret here is more than ever to demonstrate, without taking it upon oneself, to portray for the sake of the audience. In these dialogues, there is a little of the art of bookkeeping by double entry, as they say in accountancy, which is commonplace in the movies. It is a cold and demonstrative theatre—an epic theatre—in the sense that it tells more than it tries to have actor and spectator enter into the bond of feeling things in common.

According to this conception, casting is very special and it demands of the actors during the performance physical showmanship rather than a knowledge of the emotions or the usual acting qualities. The art of acting in this case is different. The verity of the acting varies. Aside from a few rather short passages, this dialogue cannot be played either at a definite pace or rhythm nor within a situation. On the contrary, neither one nor the other are necessary. The tone and a concern for the depiction of the characters are predominant. At no time is there that "exigency", that precipitancy which carries actors and spectators off their feet.

In other words—the actor must do and say, but without trying to embody a total mood. He must above all strive for a lucid composition, explanatory and detached from himself. Here one approaches rather abstract acting.

Am I mistaken?

And all this is very difficult to say. Here there is a little of what Brecht calls the "theatre of alienation", the unemotional theatre, whose aim is rather more to stir up opinion, evaluation, a reaction in the mind of the spectator and so to "engage" him in the drama rather than to carry him away, to make him participate in and commune with the feelings and sensations expressed by the actors (on their part) in a paroxysm in which actors and spectators end up by living in harmony. In this latter case, the audience has lost all faculty of judgment and its mind is filched away in favor of its feelings . . . it no longer evaluates, no longer sees, no longer judges, and it would be unable to participate in the ideas, in the themes of the work.

Excuse me for telling you all this, but I am trying to see clearly.

The ticklish problem is to know whether the audience will follow.

Up to this point the text is of real interest, without one word too many. Finally, I am very impatient and distressed.<sup>94</sup>

Four days later he still was unable to find himself in the part. But he told Father Laval, his friend and adviser, while dining with him, that the production of Greene's play would be the fulfillment of one of his fondest dreams for "So I shall tell a little of what I feel, of what I believe."<sup>95</sup>

Although realizing that he had not long to live, he intended to live his life to the hilt, for it had long been his way to expend himself in order to give pleasure to others. On August 14, 1951, another honor was bestowed upon him: he was named "Adviser to the General Administrative Staff of Arts and Letters for all questions relative to the decentralization of the theatre." He accepted this honor, and without delay, returned to rehearsals.

Later in the same day, Jovet began to yawn rather frequently, and one actor told him that he looked pale. To this he replied, "I, I have never been pale!"<sup>96</sup> His cast suggested that he rest for a few minutes. He retreated to the bar of the theatre and stretched out on the carpeting. He yawned more often now, and some members of the cast noted a bizarre sound when he opened his mouth. A few minutes later, Jovet closed his eyes. The cast, now alarmed about his condition, summoned the doctor. About a half an hour later, the doctor arrived. He gave Jovet an injection of sulphocamphor and



morphine and ordered a complete rest, since the slightest exertion might prove fatal. With the help of a mechanic, Paul Barge carried Jouvet, sitting on a chair, to a small staircase which led to his office. Once in his *loge-bureau*, they stretched him out on a divan and an extraordinary expression of vitality returned to the actor. Jouvet said, "Leave me."<sup>87</sup> A few minutes later, he complained of a pain in his left arm. The pain became acute. Paralysis enveloped the entire left side of his body. The next two days, August 15 and 16, he lay motionless on the divan. Then further complications set in and at about 6:15 of the second evening, after receiving the last rites, Jouvet died.

On the 17th and 18th, Jouvet lay in state at the Athénée Theatre. Great crowds came to pay their last respects to an actor of many gifts and true humanity. On the 18th of August, his body was conveyed to the Saint-Sulpice Church. On the 21st, at 11 o'clock in the morning, the mass took place. The Dominican brother, Father Laval, officiated at the funeral. Then his body was laid to rest in the Montmartre cemetery.

There were over 30,000 people inside and outside the church, people who hardly knew him, but had followed his career, admired his art, and loved the man. In many countries of the world, newspapers featured laudatory articles on Jouvet; and several papers printed pictures of him in the various roles he had played during his long career. Even to this hour, his grave is covered with fresh flowers almost daily. The path leading to it has been well-trodden by friends, acquaintances, and strangers who have come to offer him once again an affectionate farewell. One turns to the left at the Montmartre cemetery and follows the first path to the right, and then, at the twenty-ninth division, one arrives at the grave.

## Conclusion

*Gardener of the mind, doctor of feelings, clockmaker of words, obstetrician of the inarticulate, engineer of the imagination, cooker-up of resolutions, manager of souls, king of the theatre, and valet of the stage, conjuror or magician, tester and touchstone of the audience, lecturer, diplomat, treasurer, nurse or orchestra conductor, painter and wardrobe-keeper, exegetist, intransigent, or opportunist, convinced and hesitant; one hundred attempts have been made to define him, but he is indefinable, since his functions are indefinable. He is all love and tenderness for those he has chosen or for the work on which he is laboring, his only concern is, by raising himself, to see that wonderful eternity appear, which expresses itself by success.<sup>1</sup>*

What does Jovet stand for in the history of the French theatre? One is inclined to believe that he stands for experiment and an unremitting search for the basic values of the plays he produced and the methods needed to do them justice. Unlike Stanislavsky, Appia, Craig, Reinhardt, and Antoine, Jovet recoiled from drawing up fixed sets of rules to which actors must adhere. He felt such rules could only hamper the creative expression of the actor. He therefore approached a script with all his sensibilities and, as far as humanly possible, with a mind devoid of personal, literary, or historical preconceptions. He relied on his experience to assess for him the rhythms of the dialogue and the structure of the play. He did not hesitate to follow the dictates of his intuition, if

need be, for he realized that the truths of the theatre are not rational truths.

Jouvet came to these conclusions slowly and painfully, though they are conclusions which have become commonplace in the contemporary theatre. Nor was he alone in his experiments and explorations. A world-wide trend was in the making and Jouvet, sensing its importance, took part in it.

Jouvet's early experiences were fraught with difficulties which did not augur well for his future theatrical career. Such misadventures as Jouvet did suffer, however, were perhaps ultimately rewarding in that they gained for him a deeper understanding of human experience and developed in him broader sympathies. The result was that his work in the theatre was never barrenly abstract or purely theoretical in approach. His experiences as a man gave him the blood of life as actor and creator.

But Jouvet would never have made his mark in the French theatre had he not possessed a strong and resilient character, perseverance and a passion for getting to the bottom of things. It was during the latter part of his life especially that Jouvet felt a deep and persistent urge to gain a better understanding of himself. He realized that to do so would help him in the creation of the characters he had to portray. He also felt an inner necessity of being thoroughly honest with himself and soon realized that his problem stemmed from a basic duality of mind. Certain symptoms made that clear to him: his deep feeling of insecurity, his lengthening periods of melancholy and dissatisfaction, his frenzied drive and flight from self into the roles he portrayed. He sensed a profound impulse to find a hospitable home for his embattled spirit, an asylum from the harassments of reality. Eventually he found such a home in the roles created by Rostand, Giraudoux, and Molière.

What were Jouvet's contributions to the theatre? These would include: (1) introducing Giraudoux the playwright;

(2) freeing Molière from the trappings of tradition; (3) using new lighting techniques (Jouvet invented a special type of light called the *Jouvets*); (4) perfecting the art of applying make-up (so intent was Jouvet upon realizing the proper effect that he himself often made-up the faces of his actors); (5) introducing a new verbal musicality and rich rhythmic effects into dialogue; and (6) using distinctive and characteristic décor to point up the dramatic. Jouvet's décor ranged from the very simple to the highly rococo. Jouvet also possessed a rich palette and sometimes his sets had the effect of an impressionistic painting.

Jouvet's lectures on acting and his direction as professor at the Conservatoire were also noteworthy. He believed in the Socratic method of teaching and wanted to know and understand his students. He also wanted his students to know and understand themselves. He tried to instill in them a spirit of search, a need to probe. Valéry said: "Le texte meurt à sa source." Jouvet said it was up to the actor to resuscitate the text by creating flesh-and-blood human beings. This could be accomplished only by passing through three stages in acting: sincerity, objectivity, and intuition. Although few actors ever really reach the final intuitive phase, Jouvet knew it well.

According to Jouvet, the art of the theatre is based on sensations and the effective use of them. A play is a message, a proposition, an act of love, and it is up to the actor to translate and project for others the ideas and sensations of the author. To achieve the best results requires a high degree of receptivity and an ability to reject at times all that is cerebral and intellectual.

The experienced actor can readily detect the difference between the performer whom he must be and the instrument which he is. He knows that the character he is portraying lives its own independent existence and that his own sensibilities may often be at complete variance with those of the

character he portrays. Yet it is only at moments of real *dédoublement* that the actor can criticize himself and improve his creative powers through intuition. Such opportunity is, however, lost if the actor uses the character to further his own selfish ends: diletantism, exhibitionism, egoism, escape.

It is rather interesting to see how a sensitive actor, like Jouvet, reacted to the reading of a play. He first would preoccupy himself with the page listing the characters, which described the relationships of the protagonists. He would then turn to the summary of the décor, and by the time he had finished reading the second act, he was often unable to remember any of the play's details. While this might indicate that sensitivity and intellectual faculties sometimes work at cross purposes, it could also portend the gaining of greater insight by the actor.

Jouvet often pictured the actor as a tight-rope walker, relying on sensitivity or mechanics to keep his balance. At some point along the wire neither is needed, and as the actor stands there in perfect equilibrium, nobody, not even the playwright, can experience his dizziness, vertigo, madness, and intoxication.<sup>2</sup>

We will speak of all this when you meet with your first discouraging experience, your first failure, after the glow which your first success has given you, at the moment when anxious concern to have another one shall take hold of you.

For you will experience failures and discouragement. If the theatre does not give them to you, then life will come between the theatre and you.

Your mouth will taste bitterness or your heart will be bitter.

Do not be disillusioned.

Your first discouraging experience will be all powerful, salutary, it will serve to help you in the end.

You have two roads before you, either to submit, to be an unconscious instrument, to let yourself go, be carried away; or to try to understand, to serve, to seek perfection for your purpose, to be an actor, with or without a mission, with or without a conscience.

I do not say that one is worth more than another.

I shall tell you, as you will later tell it, what I know, what I saw, what I learned.

Listen, my friend, or else turn the page, and listen no longer.<sup>3</sup>



## *Career of Louis Jouvet*

(All material on the career of Louis Jouvet is drawn from *La Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, I-II [1952] and used with the kind permission of its editors.)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Repertory Group or Theatre</i>	<i>Vehicle or Play</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Number of Performances</i>
June 14, 1908	GROUPE D'ACTION D'ART (under auspices of L'Université Populaire du Faubourg Saint-Antoine)	Scene from <i>Triumvirs in Corday</i> , by François Ponsard	Danton	1
July 18, 1908	At the Université Populaire du Faubourg Saint-Antoine	Act III of <i>Les Mauvais Bergers</i> , by Octave Mirbeau <i>Le Moulin des Chimères</i> , unpublished 1 act play by Bernard Marcotte	Hargand Don Quichote	1 1
Aug. 22-23, 1908	THÉÂTRE MUNICIPAL OF ST. DIZIER (outside of Groupe d'Action d'Art)	Scenes from <i>Dom Juan</i> , by Molière <i>Oedipe-Roi</i> , 5 act tragedy by Sophocles, trans. by Lacroix	Don Luis Le Coryphée (on tour)	1 2
Aug. 30, 1908	GROUPE D'ACTION D'ART Château du Peuple	<i>Les Maîtres de la Vie</i> , unpublished 1 act play by Georges-Hector Mai <i>Le Misanthrope</i> , by Molière	Maximilien-Serron Alceste	1 1

Date	Repertory Group or Theatre	Vehicle or Play	Role	Number of Performances
Sept. 21, 1908	GROUPE D'ACTION D'ART (cont.) Angoulême, Salle des Concerts, place de la Gendarmerie	Poems: "La Statue" by Bernard Marcotte; "La Ballade du Pauvre Incompris," by Banville d'Hostel; "Le Petit Vaguenillou," by André Colomer. Lecture on <i>Les Maîtres            de la Vie</i> Scenes from <i>Le Moulin des Citi-            mères</i>	recited by Jouvot  Maximilien-Serror  Don Quichotte	1  1  1
Sept. 27, 1908	L'Hexagramme Feast of 5th day of the Balance (Libra), 7775	Poems: "A mes Frères Hexagram- mistes," by Léon Combes; "Chant Funèbre des Hommes de Mon Temps," by M. Victor-Emile Mi- chelet Scenes from <i>Un Magistrat Compa-            rait Devant un Homme Libre</i> , by Han Ryner	recited by L. Jouvot  Le Prêteur	1  1
Oct. 4, 1908	At the Université Populaire du Faubourg Saint Antoine	<i>Les Revenants, (Ghosts)</i> , 3 act play by Henrik Ibsen	Oswald	1
Oct. 6, 1908	SALON D'AUTOMNE	Lecture: "Notre Concours," by Georges Grappe; recitation of poems by various actors including L. Jouvot		1



Oct. 20, 1908	1	Lecture: "La Poésie Transfiguratrice," by Jean Royère; recitation of poems by various actors including L. Jouvet	
Nov. 3, 1908	1	Lecture: "La Tradition Populaire dans la Poésie," by Albert Mockel; recitation of poems by various actors including L. Jouvet	
<b>GROUPE D'ACTION D'ART</b>			
Nov. 14-15, 1908	2	<i>Briannicus</i> , 5 act tragedy by Racine	Burghus
	2	<i>Les Triumvirs</i> , by François Pontard	Danton
Nov. 15, 1908	1	<i>Le Principal Témoin</i> , tragedy in verse and prose by Georges Courteline	Grenouillot
	1	<i>Le Droit au Bonheur</i> , 2 act play by Camille Lemonnier and Pierre Soulaire	Joris Sangue
	1	<i>Hortense, Couche-toi</i> , 1 act play by Georges Courteline	M. Saumâtre
Dec. 26-27, 1908	2	<i>La Recommandation</i> , 1 act comedy by Max Maury [ <i>sic</i> ]	Le Directeur
Jan. 16-17, 1909	2	<i>La Coeur a Ses Raisons</i> , 1 act comedy by R. de Flers and Caillavet	Jacques

*Number of Performances*

*Role*

*Vehicle or Play*

*Repertory Group or Theatre*

*Date*

GRUPE D'ACTION D'ART (cont.)

Jan. 28, 1909  
At the Université Populaire du Faubourg Saint-Antoine  
Poems: "J'entends chanter l'Amérique" ("I hear America singing"), "A la Frégate" ("To the Man-of-War-Bird"), and "Prière de Colomb" (Prayer of Columbus), by Walt Whitman  
recited by L. Jouvét 1

THÉÂTRE D'ACTION D'ART

Feb. 28, 1909  
At the Université Populaire du Faubourg Saint-Antoine  
Poem: "La Statue," by Bernard Marcotte  
*Le Combat de Cerfs*, 3 act play by Emile Bergerat  
recited by L. Jouvét 1  
Jacques Séguin,  
Cte d'Olaastro 1

March 13-14, 1909  
Théâtre de la Ruche des Arts  
*Le Chien Flamberge*, by G. Nigond and Jouvét 2

April 4, 1909  
(matinee)  
L'Hexagramme (Salle Berlioz)  
Feast of 15th day of the Bélier (Aries), 7776  
Lucien 1  
Jusqu'à l'Âme, 2 act play by Han Ryner

April 4, 1909  
(evening)  
At the Université Populaire du Faubourg Saint-Antoine  
Lecture on the works of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam: *Hermosa*; *Don Juan* (fragments); *L'Existence* (fragments)  
Jouvét participating 1

April 22, 1909	SOCIÉTÉ DES ARTISTES INDÉPENDANTS (25th exhibition at the Jardin des Tuileries, Terrace de l'Orangerie)	Afternoon of the Poets: Lecture, "Les Poèmes de l'Année," by Guillaume Apollinaire; "J'aime le Cra-paud," by Pierre Covrad; "Ce Soir," by Marie Danguet; "Les Barques Frêles," by Jean Clary	recited by L. Jouvet	1
April 23, 1909	THÉÂTRE D'ACTION D'ART	<i>A propos 1909</i> , by Georges-Victor Mai	Jouvet	1
April 29, 1909	SOCIÉTÉ DES ARTISTES INDÉPENDANTS (25th exhibition at the Jardin des Tuileries, Terrace de l'Orangerie)	Afternoon of the Poets: Lecture, "Les Poètes Inédits," by Henri Strontz; "Printemps," by A. Segoulonna; "Vers la Mer," by Fabien Co-trix; "Adieux de Dante à Béat-rivana," by Paul Cabillard; "Nir-vana," by Louis Le Leu	recited by L. Jouvet	1
June 5-6, 1909	THÉÂTRE D'ACTION D'ART Théâtre de la Ruche des Arts	<i>Andromaque</i> , 5 act tragedy by Ra-cine	Pylade	1
Sept. 19, 1909	At the Université Populaire du Faubourg Saint-Antoine	<i>L'Ecole des Femmes</i> , 5 act comedy by Molière	Arnolphe	1
Oct. 31, 1909		Previews of coming events	Jouvet	1
Nov. 7, 1909	Trocadéro (Petite Salle) (with the Society of the Friends of Balzac)	<i>Le Faiseur</i> , prose comedy in 5 acts by Honoré de Balzac	August Mercadet	2

Date	Repertory Group or Theatre THÉÂTRE D'ACTION D'ART (cont.)	Vehicle or Play	Role	Number of Performances
Feb. 19, 1910	Théâtre de l'Alhénéé Saint-Germain (future Vieux-Colombier)	<i>L'Œuvre des Morts</i> , by Balzac <i>Le Colonel Chabert</i> , 3 act play and 4 tableaux by Louis Forest, based on a novel of Balzac	Le Colonel Chabert	1
March 6, 1910	Théâtre de la Ruche des Arts	<i>L'Asile de Nuit</i> , 1 act play by Max Maurey	Ma Soupe	1
May 15, 1910	At the Université Populaire du Faubourg Saint-Antoine	<i>Poil de Carotte</i> , 1 act play by Jules Renard	M. Lepic	1
June 12, 1910	THÉÂTRE D'IDÉES	<i>Féministe</i> , 1 act play by Lydie Pis-sargowski and Léon Combes; mise en scène by L. Jouvét, director of the Théâtre d'Action d'Art	Le Rédacteur	2
	ZELLER TOUR Brussels and Liège	<i>Le Juif Errant; Monte-Cristo</i>		
	THÉÂTRE D'IDÉES	<i>L'Annonce Faite à Marie</i> , by Paul Claudel	The Man	
Oct. 3, 1911	THÉÂTRE DES ARTS	<i>The Brothers Karamazov</i> , 4 act play by Jacques Copeau and Jean Croué, taken from the novel by Dostoevski	Père Zossima	

Nov. 8, 1911	<i>Le Pain</i> , 5 act tragedy by Henri Ghéon	Méteil	
Dec. 7, 1911	<i>Le Chagrin dans le Palais de Han</i> , Chinese poem for the stage by Louis Laloy	Le Ministre	
Jan. 6, 1912	<i>Les Dominos</i> , by Couperin and Laloy	Le joueur de vielle	
Jan. 6, 1912	<i>Fantasio</i> , 2 act comedy by Alfred de Musset	Le Roi	
April 18, 1912	<i>Mil neuf cent douze</i> , revue by Muller and Gignoux	Le Maigre, le lion, le bourgeois	
Oct. 22, 1913	<i>Une Femme Tuée par la Douceur</i> , 5 act play by Thomas Heywood, adapted by Jacques Copeau	Master Cranwell	26
Oct. 22, 1913	<i>L'Amour Médecin</i> , 3 act comedy by Molière	Macroton	68
Nov. 11, 1913	<i>Les Fils Louverné</i> , 4 act play by Jean Schlumberger	Grimbosq	27
Nov. 18, 1913	<i>Barberine</i> , 3 act comedy by Alfred de Musset	Uladislas	52
Nov. 23, 1913	<i>L'Avare</i> , 5 act comedy by Molière	Maitre Simon	58

VIEUX-COLOMBIER

Paris

Date	Repertory Group or Theatre	Vehicle or Play	Role	Number of Performances
Dec. 22, 1913	VIEUX-COLOMBIER Paris (cont.)	<i>La Farce du Savetier Enragé</i> , 15th-cent. anonymous farce	Le Savetier	7
Jan. 1, 1914		<i>La Jalousie du Barbouillé</i> , 1 act comedy by Molière	Le Docteur	66
Feb. 10, 1914		<i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>	Féodor Pavlovitch Karamazov	92
May 22, 1914		<i>Twelfth Night</i> , 5 act comedy by Shakespeare, trans. by Th. Lascaris	Sir Andrew Aguecheek	140
Nov. 27, 1917	New York	<i>Impromptu du Vieux-Colombier</i> , 1 act play by Jacques Copeau	Jouvet (on tour)	1
Nov. 27, 1917		<i>Les Fourberies de Scapin</i> , 5 act comedy by Molière	Géronte (on tour)	30
Dec. 5, 1917		<i>Le Carrosse du Saint-Sacrement</i> , comedy by Prosper Mérimée	L'Evêque de Lima (on tour)	134
Feb. 20, 1918		<i>Les Mauvais Bergers</i> , play by Octave Mirbeau	Louis Thieux (on tour)	9
March 5, 1918		<i>La Petite Marquise</i> , by Meilhac and Halévy	Le Marquis de Keer-gazon (on tour)	14

April 2, 1918	<i>La Paix chez Soi</i> , 1 act comedy by Courteline	Trielle (on tour)	3
Oct. 21, 1918	<i>Le Mariage de Figaro</i> , 5 act comedy by Beaumarchais	Brid'Oison (on tour)	36
Oct. 28, 1918	<i>Blanchette</i> , 3 act comedy by Brieux	Le Cantonnier (on tour)	8
Nov. 11, 1918	<i>Crainquebille</i> , 1 act comedy by Anatole France	Crainquebille (on tour)	8
Nov. 25, 1918	<i>Le Médecin Malgré Lui</i> , 3 act comedy by Molière	Sganarelle (on tour)	23
Dec. 2, 1918	<i>Rosmersholm</i> , 4 act play by Ibsen	Ulric Brendel (on tour)	8
Dec. 9, 1918	<i>Le Gendre de M. Poirier</i> , by Emile Augier and Jules Sandeau	Le Marquis (on tour)	8
Dec. 16, 1918,	<i>Les Caprices de Marianne</i> , 2 act comedy by Alfred de Musset	Claudio (on tour)	8
Dec. 16, 1918,	<i>Le Fardeau de la Liberté</i> , 1 act comedy by Tristan Bernard	Chambolin (on tour)	8
Dec. 23, 1918	<i>Les Romanesques</i> , by Edmond Rostand	Straford(?) (on tour)	73
Feb. 17, 1919	<i>La Coupe Enchantée</i> , 1 act comedy by La Fontaine and Champmeslé	Josselin (on tour)	

Date	Repertory Group or Theatre	Vehicle or Play	Role	Number of Performances
April 17, 1919	VIEUX-COLOMBIER (cont.) New York	<i>Le Misanthrope</i> , 5 act comedy by Molière	Philinte (on tour)	28
Feb. 10, 1920	Paris	<i>A Winter's Tale</i> , 5 act comedy by Shakespeare, trans. by Suzanne Bing and Jacques Copeau	Autolycus	25
April 10, 1920		<i>L'Oeuvre des Athlètes</i> , 4 act comedy by Georges Duhamel	Filliatre Demelin	22
May 27, 1920		<i>Cromedeyre-le-Vieil</i> , 5 act play by Jules Romains	Anselme	19
July 1, 1920		<i>La Folle Journée</i> , 1 act comedy by Emile Mazaud	Truchard	61
March 23, 1921		<i>La Mort de Sparte</i> , 3 act play by Jean Schlumberger	Antigone	7
March 7, 1922		<i>L'Amour Livre d'Or</i> , 3 act play by Tolstoy	Le prince	16
June 16, 1922		Saitil, 5 act play by André Gide	Le Grand Prêtre	9
March 12, 1923	COMÉDIE DES CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES	<i>M. Le Trouhadec Saisi par la Débauche</i> , 5 act comedy by Jules Ro-	M. Le Trouhadec (on tour)	173
				27



Oct. 24, 1923	mains (first production); sketches for sets by Jouvet, executed by Léon Deguilloux and C. Demangeat; revived in 1941 on tour	Le Général Foulon-Dubelair	1,298 142
Dec. 14, 1923	<i>Le Journée des Aveux</i> , 3 act comedy by Georges Duhamel, mise en scène and décor by Pitoëff	Dr. Knock (on tour)	134
Dec. 14, 1923	<i>Knock; ou, Le Triomphe de la Médecine</i> , 3 act comedy by Jules Romains (first production); sketches for décor by Jouvet, executed by Jeanne Dubouchet		
Oct. 6, 1924	<i>Amédée et les Messieurs en Rang</i> , 1 act play by Jules Romains (first production); sketches of sets executed by Aguetand and Lauer	Le Vicomte	451
Oct. 24, 1924	<i>La Scintillante</i> , 1 act comedy by Jules Romains (first production); décor by Jouvet and J. Dubouchet	Truchard (on tour)	10 34
	<i>La Folle Journée</i> , 1 act play by Emile Mazaud (revival); sets by Jouvet; revived in 1941 on tour; décor by Christian Bérard, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat		

Number of Performances

Role

Vehicle or Play

Repertory Group or Theatre

Date

4

10

60

35

9

9

13

*Le Pain de Ménage*, 1 act play by Jules Romains (revival)

*Le Testament du Père Leleu*, 3 act farce by Roger Martin du Gard (revival)

*Malborough s'en va-t-en Guerre*, 3 act play with 4 tableaux by Marcel Achard (first production); sets created by Jouvet and J. Dubouchet; music by Georges Auric

*Le Mariage de M. Le Trouhadec*, 4 act comedy by Jules Romains (first production); sets created by Jouvet, and J. Dubouchet; music by Georges Auric

*L'Amour qui Passe*, 2 act play by the Quintero brothers, trans. by M. Dubois and Roger Martin du Gard; sets created by André Boll; costumes by J. Dubouchet

*La Jalousie du Barbouillé*, 1 act farce by Molière (revival); with

Le Docteur  
(on tour)

Oct. 24, 1924

Oct. 24, 1924

Dec. 8, 1924

Jan. 31, 1925

April 17, 1925

April 17, 1925

same mise en scene as in Vieux-Colombier production; revived in 1941 on tour with sets by C. Bérard; revived in 1943 on tour; sets by Jouvet assisted by C. Demangeat, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat

5

Muscar

*Tripes d'Or*, 3 act play by Crommelynck (first production); décor by J. Dubouchet

83

Démétrios

*Démétrios*, 1 act play by Jules Romains (first production); sets created by Jouvet assisted by J. Dubouchet; décor executed by G. Perrin, painted by André Boll

84

*Madame Béliard*, 3 act play by Charles Vildrac (first production); sets by Jouvet and J. Dubouchet; décor executed by G. Perrin, painted by André Boll

60

Bava

*Bava L'Africain*, 4 act comedy by Bernard Zimmer (first production); sets designed by J. Dubouchet, executed by G. Perrin, painted by Holy

April 30, 1925

Oct. 9, 1925

Oct. 9, 1925

April 26, 1926

Date	Repertory Group or Theatre	Vehicle or Play	Role	Number of Performances
Sept. 2, 1926	COMÉDIE DES CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES (cont.)	<i>Deux Paires d'Amis</i> , 3 act play by Pierre Bost (first production); sketches for sets by J. Dubouchet, executed by G. Perrin		35
Sept. 2, 1926		<i>Le Carrosse du Saint Sacrement</i> , 1 act play by Prosper Merimée (revival); sketches for sets by J. Dubouchet, executed by G. Perrin	L'Évêque de Lima (on tour)	35 8
Oct. 5, 1926		<i>Le Dictateur</i> , 4 act play by Jules Romains (first production); sketches for sets by J. Dubouchet and Aguetand, executed by G. Perrin, painted by Holy; furniture by Rhulmann		70
Dec. 28, 1926		<i>Outward Bound</i> , 3 act play with 4 tableaux by Sutton Vane, trans. by Paul Verola (first production); sketches for sets by J. Dubouchet, executed by G. Perrin, painted by Lavignac and Pelegry	Tom Prior (on tour)	190 6
April 5, 1927		<i>The Inspector General</i> , 5 act play by Gogol, trans. by Olga Chouman-ski and Jules Delacre (first pro-	Klestakoff	54

<p>duction); mise en scène by Delacre and Jouvet, executed by G. Perrin, painted by Lavignac and Pelegruy; costumes by Choumanski, executed by Théâtre du Marais studios</p>	<p>198 31</p>
<p><i>Léopold le Bien-aimé</i>, 3 act play by Jean Sarmant (first production); sets created by René Gabriel, executed by G. Perrin; revived 1942 on tour; décor refashioned by C. Demangeat, executed by L. De- guilloux</p>	<p>Léopold (on tour)</p>
<p><i>Le Coup du Deux Décembre</i>, 3 act play by Bernard Zimmer (first production); sketches for décor by J. Dubouchet, executed by Comédie des Champs Elysées studios</p>	<p>M. Lèbre</p>
<p><i>Siegfried</i>, 4 act play by Jean Giraudoux (first production); décor and costumes by Camille Cipra</p>	<p>Général de Fontgeyoy, Zelten (on tour)</p>
<p><i>Suzanne</i>, 3 act play by Stéphane Passeur (first production); sets created by Louis Estevez and Dominique, executed and painted by Gustave Bay; landscape painted by C. Cipra</p>	<p>Cretai</p>

Oct. 12, 1927

March 28, 1928

May 3, 1928

Jan. 30, 1929

Number of  
Performances

Role

Véhicule or Play

Repertory Group or Theatre

Date

121

Jef

*Jean de la Lune*, 3 act play by Marcel Achard (first production); sets designed by E. Printz, executed by G. Bay and Jacopozi; backdrop painted by C. Cipra

COMÉDIE DES CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES  
(cont.)

April 18, 1929

236  
18Mercure  
(on tour)

*Amphitryon 38*, 3 act play by Jean Giraudoux (first production); décor created by C. Cipra, executed by J. Dubouchet and G. Bay; revived in 1934 (Théâtre Athénée); costumes by A. M. Cassandre, executed by B. Karinska; sets by A. M. Cassandre, executed by L. Deguilloux

Nov. 8, 1929

178  
12Valfino  
(on tour)

*Le Prof d'Anglais*, 3 act play by Régis Gignoux (first production); sketches for sets by R. Gabriel, executed by G. Bay

April 30, 1930

287

Sganarelle  
(on tour)

*Donogoo-Tonka*, 3 act play with 30 tableaux by Jules Romains (first production); décor by Paul Colin  
*Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, 3 act comedy by Molière (revival)

THÉÂTRE PICALLE

Oct. 25, 1930

Feb. 3 to  
March 31, 1931

Career of Louis Jouvet

49

Thomas

*L'Eau Fraîche*, 3 act comedy by Drieu La Rochelle (first production); sets by R. Gabriel, executed by G. Bay and Eugène Printz

COMÉDIE DES CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES

May 20, 1931

112

Armand

*Un Taciturne*, 3 act play by Roger Martin du Gard (first production); sets for acts 1 and 2 by R. Gabriel, executed by G. Bay; sets for act 3 by E. Printz, executed by G. Bay

45  
16

Le Gardé  
(on tour)

*Judith*, 3 act play by Jean Giraudoux (first production); décor and costumes created at Théâtre Pigalle studios with assistance of René Moulart; revived in 1942 on tour; sets by Eduardo Anahory, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat; costumes by E. Anahory, executed by Valentine; music by Renzo Massarini

THÉÂTRE PICALLE

Nov. 5, 1931

52

*Le Roi Masqué*, 3 act play by Jules Romains; décor by R. Moulart

Dec. 19, 1931

237

Domino

*Domino*, 3 act comedy by Marcel Achard (first production); décor by E. Printz and G. Bay

COMÉDIE DES CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES

Feb. 3, 1932

34

*La Pâtisseries du Village*, 3 act

THÉÂTRE PICALLE

March 8, 1932

## THÉÂTRE PICALLE (cont.)

comedy with 6 tableaux by Alfred Savoir (first production); décor and costumes by R. Moulaert

Nov. 18, 1932	COMÉDIE DES CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES	<i>La Margrave</i> , 3 act comedy by Alfred Savoir (first production); sets by R. Moulaert, executed by G. Bay; costumes by J. Dubouchet and R. Moulaert	Le Margrave	104
March 1, 1933		<i>Intermezzo</i> , 3 act comedy by Jean Giraudoux (first production); décor and costumes by Léon Leyritz; music by Francis Poulenc	Le Contrôleur	116
Dec. 8, 1933		<i>Pétrus</i> , 3 act comedy by Marcel Achard (first production); décor and costumes by L. Leyritz, executed by L. Deguilloux; music by F. Poulenc	Pétrus	69
April 11, 1934		<i>La Machine Infernale</i> , 4 act play by Jean Cocteau (first production); sketches for décor by C. Bérard, executed by L. Deguilloux and B. Karinska	Le Berger de Laïus	64



287  
11

Lewis Dodd  
(on tour)

*Tessa* (*The Constant Nymph*), 3 act play with 6 tableaux by Margaret Kennedy and Basil Dean, adapted for French stage by J. Girardoux; sets by R. Moulaert; costumes by Dimitri Bouchène, executed by B. Karinska; music by Maurice Jaubert; revived in 1942 on tour; sets recreated by C. Demangeat and L. Deguilloux

247  
8

Hector  
(on tour)

*La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas Lieu* (*Tiger at the Gates*), 2 act play by Jean Girardoux (first production); sets by Mariano Andreu; costumes by Alix; music by M. Jaubert; revived in 1937 and 1941 on tour; sets by Guillaume Monin, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat; costumes by G. Mo-min, executed by Ira Belline according to suggestions of C. Bérard

195

Outourou

*Supplément au Voyage de Cook*, 1 act play by Jean Girardoux (first production); décor and costumes by M. Andreu, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat

446

Arnolphe

*L'École des Femmes*, 5 act comedy

Nov. 14, 1934

ATHÉNÉE THÉÂTRE LOUIS JOUVET

Nov. 22, 1935

Nov. 22, 1935

May 9, 1936

229

(on tour)

by Molière; sketches for sets by C. Bérard, executed by L. Deguilloux; sketches for costumes by C. Bérard, executed by B. Karinska; music by Vittorio Rieti; revived in 1941 on tour; new mechanical effects by C. Demangeat

56

*Le Château de Cartes*, 3 act play by Stéphane Passeur (first production); sketches for sets of acts 1 and 3 by Pierre Marquet, for act 2 by E. Printz, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat

32

*L'Illusion*, 5 act comedy by Pierre Corneille; décor by C. Bérard, executed by Comédie-Française studios; costumes by C. Bérard, executed by Comédie-Française by V. Rieti

178  
5Le Mendiant  
(on tour)

*Electre*, 2 act play by Jean Giraudoux (first production); sketches for sets by G. Monin, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat;

Jan. 9, 1937

ATHÉNÉE (cont.)

Feb. 15, 1937

COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE

May 13, 1937

ATHÉNÉE THÉÂTRE LOUIS JOUVET

Dec. 4, 1937	costumes by D. Bouchène, executed by B. Karinska; music by V. Rieti; revived 1941 on tour; new sets by C. Demangeat	Jouvet	52
March 25, 1938	<i>L'Impromptu de Paris</i> , 1 act play by Jean Giraudoux (first production); décor by G. Monin	Frank O'Hara and Kid Jackson	268
Oct. 13, 1938	<i>Le Corsaire</i> , 2 act play with 6 tableaux by Marcel Achard (first production); décor by C. Bérard and G. Monin, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat; costumes by C. Bérard and G. Monin, executed by Ira Belline and Jean Patou; music by V. Rieti		68
Oct. 13, 1938	<i>Cantique des Cantiques</i> , 1 act play by Jean Giraudoux (first production); décor by E. Vuillard		17
May 4, 1939	<i>Tricolore</i> , by Pierre Lestringuez (first production); décor by G. Monin; music by Darius Milhaud		275 36
	<i>Onidne</i> , 3 act play by Jean Giraudoux, taken from short story by Frédéric de la Motte-Fouqué (first production); sets by Pavel Tcheitchew, executed by L. Deguilloux	Le Chevalier Hans (on tour)	
		ATHÉNÉE THÉÂTRE LOUIS JOUVET	
		COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE	

ATHÉNÉE (cont.)

and C. Demangeat; costumes by P. Tchelitchev, executed by I. Bel-line; music by Henri Sauguet

Josselin  
(on tour) 29*La Coupe Enchantée*, 1 act comedy by La Fontaine and Champmeslé (revival); décor and costumes by C. Bérard, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. DemangeatModeste  
(on tour) 21*Je Vivrai un Grand Amour*, 3 act play by Stève Passeur; décor and costumes by Jacques Dupont, carried out by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat; mise en scène composed with assistance of André MoreauBlazius  
(on tour) 32*On ne Badine pas avec L'Amour*, 3 act comedy with 9 tableaux by Alfred de Musset; décor by Joas-Maria Santos, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat; costumes by J.-M. Santos and J. Senna, executed by Valentine; music by Paul Misraki

M. de Marsac

*L'Apollon de Marsac*, 1 act comedy

June 16, 1942

June 16, 1942

Sept. 3, 1941

July 17, 1941

June 19, 1942	by Jean Giraudoux (first production) ; sets by E. Anahory, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat; revived 1947 in Paris	(on tour)	16
June 19, 1942	<i>L'Annonce Faite à Marie</i> , 4 act play and prologue by Paul Claudel; sketches for sets by E. Anahory, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat; costumes by Ana-Ines Carcano, executed by Valentine; music by R. Massarini; revived 1946 in Paris	Anne Vercors (on tour)	33
June 26, 1942	<i>Le Médecin Malgré Lui</i> , 3 act comedy with 4 tableaux by Molière; sets executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat; costumes by Valentine; music by R. Massarini	Sganarelle (on tour)	20
June 26, 1942	<i>L'Occasion</i> , 1 act play by Prosper Merimée; décor by Enrique Liberal, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat; costumes by E. Liberal, executed by Valentine; music by Paul Misraki	Fray Eugénio (on tour)	3
June 30, 1942	<i>La Belle au Bois</i> , 3 act play by Jules Supervielle; sketches for sets by A.-I. Carcano, executed by	Barbe Blenc (on tour)	6

L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat; sketches for costumes by A.-I. Carcano, executed by Valentine; music by V. Rieti

*La France Poétique, de Villon à nos jours*

Jouvel  
(on tour)  
Philinte, Jouvet  
(on tour)

26

5

*Le Misanthrope* (first act) by Molière, accompanied by lecture and recitations of poetry

Le Chiffonnier

297

*La Folle de Chaillot (The Mad-woman of Chaillot)*, 2 act play by Jean Giraudoux (first production); sets by C. Bérard, executed by L. Deguilloux and C. Demangeat, painted by Deshays; costumes by C. Bérard, executed by I. Karinski; music by H. Sauguot

Anne Vercors

7

*L'Annonce Faite à Marie*, 4 act play and prologue by Paul Claudel (revival)

M. de Marsac

92

*L'Apollon de Marsac*, 1 act comedy by Jean Giraudoux (revival); new sets by E. Anahory, executed by

June 11, 1946

April 19, 1947

April 19, 1947	L. Deguilloux	<i>Les Bonnes</i> , 1 act play by Jean Genet (first production); sets by C. Bérard, executed by L. Deguilloux, painted by Laverdet; dresses by Lanvin; furniture by Jacques Damiot	92
Dec. 24, 1947		<i>Dom Juan ou Le Festin de Pierre</i> , 5 act comedy with 7 tableaux by Molière; sets by C. Bérard, executed by C. Demangeat and L. Deguilloux, painted by Laverdet; costumes by C. Bérard, executed by I. Karinski; music by H. Sauguet	189 11
Feb. 18, 1949	THÉÂTRE MARIGNY (with Jean-Louis Barrault)	<i>Les Fourberies de Scapin</i> , 3 act comedy by Molière; sets by C. Bérard, executed by Chevreux, painted by Laverdet; costumes by C. Bérard, executed by I. Karinski; music by H. Sauguet	70 23
Jan. 27, 1950	ATHÈNÉE THÉÂTRE LOUIS JOUVET	<i>Le Tartuffe ou L'Imposteur</i> , 5 act comedy by Molière; sets by Georges Braque, executed by L. Deguilloux, painted by Deshays; furniture by C. Demangeat; costumes	139

*Number of  
Performances*

*Role*

*Vehicle or Play*

*Repertory Group or Theatre*

*Date*

		by I. Karinski; music by H. Sauguet			
June 7, 1951	ATHÉNÉE (cont.)	<i>Le Diable et la Bon Dieu</i> , 3 act play and 11 tableaux by Jean-Paul Sartre; sketches for sets by Félix Labisse, executed by P. and E. Bertin; sketches for costumes by Francine Gaillard-Risler, executed by Madame Schiaparelli			117
July 1, 1951	BELLAC	Hommage to Jean Giraudoux, presented by André Beucler. Scenes from <i>Intermezzo</i> , <i>L'Apollon de Marsac</i> , and <i>Ondine</i> (final scene)	Le Controleur, M. de Marsac, Hans		1



***Motion Pictures Made by  
Louis Jouvet***

- 1933      **Topaz; Knock (first version)**
- 1935      **La Kermesse Héroïque (Carnival in Flanders)**
- 1936      **Mister Flow; Les Bas-Fonds**
- 1937      **Mademoiselle Docteur; Un Carnet de Bal (Life Dances On);  
Drôle de Drame; Alibi**
- 1937-38   **La Marseillaise; Ramuntcho**
- 1938      **La Maison du Maltais; Entrée des Artistes; Education de Prince;  
Le Drame à Shanghai; Hôtel du Nord**
- 1939      **La Fin du Jour; La Charrette Fantôme**
- 1939-40   **Volpone**
- 1940      **Un Tel Père et Fils; Sérénade**
- 1946      **Un Revenant; Copie Conforme**
- 1947      **Quai des Orfèvres**
- 1948      **Les Amoureux Sont Seuls au Monde**
- 1948-49   **Entre Onze Heures et Minuit**
- 1949      **Retour à la Vie; Miquette et sa Mère; Lady Paname**
- 1950      **Knock (second version)**
- 1951      **Une Histoire d'Amour**

So he was to appear as Jouvet during most professional engagements until after World War I.

15. Jouvet's friends were: Banville d'Hostel, Roger Desvignes (G. H. Mai), Célerier, Bernard Marcotte, Gabriel Tristan Franconi, André Colomer, André de Szekeley, and F. Loscen. *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, I-II (1952), 18.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

17. Corneille's play *Horace*.

18. Leloir (1860-1909) was born in Paris and was the student of Bressant at the Conservatoire. He acted at the Gymnase and made his debut at the Conservatoire in 1880 and later became a Sociétaire and Professor there. He wrote *L'Art de Dire* and *Chèz le Docteur*.

19. Jouvet, *Réflexions*, p. 178.

20. *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, I-II (1952), 21. For further information on Jouvet's early productions see Appendix.

21. Geismer, "Réussir," *Jean-Claude*, July 1939.

22. Vildrac to author, 1952.

23. Prophetically, the latter production took place at the Théâtre de l'Athénée Saint-Germain, 21 Rue du Vieux-Colombier, which was to be the site of the future Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier.

24. Geismer, "Réussir," *Jean-Claude*, July 1939.

25. Clerc, "Les Evadés de la Pharmacie," in *La Revue des Spécialistes*, March-April, 1935.

26. In August 1910, together with the impresario Zeller, they toured Belgium and the French provinces, performing in *Hernani*, *Le Juif Errant*, *Ruy Blas*, *La Tosca*, *Le Courrier de Lyon*, and *Le Comte de Monté Cristo*.

27. Jouvet, *Témoignages*, p. 164.

28. Geismer, "Réussir," *Jean-Claude*, July, 1939.

29. Vera Sergine, Mady-Berry, Gina Barbieri, Cécile Guyon, Durec, Charles Dullin, Roger Karl, and Louis Jouvet.

30. Boll, *Jacques Rouché*, p. 20.

31. The other decorative artists engaged by Rouché were Maxime Dethomas, René Piot and Jacques Drésa.

32. Boll, *Jacques Rouché*, p. 230.

33. Rouché, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, April, 1952.

34. This play proved Jouvet's talents not only as an actor, but also as a make-up artist.

35. Copeau, "Le Pain de Ghéon," *Le Théâtre*, December 1911.

36. Rouché to author, 1952.

37. *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, I-II (1952), 25.

38. De Saix, "Louis Jouvet," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, August 22, 1946.

39. Copeau informed Jouvet during a performance at the Théâtre du Château d'Eau that the Vieux-Colombier theatre would soon be founded and that he wanted Jouvet to join the group.

40. Copeau, "Un Essai de Rénovation dramatique; Le Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier," *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, September 1, 1913.

## JOUVET AND THE VIEUX COLOMBIER

1. Jovet, "Hommage à J. Copeau," in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, February 10, 1949.
2. Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau*, p. 25.
3. Perhaps inconoclasm is the wrong word to describe his attitude. Copeau did not want to break with the past, but rather to return to the fundamental sound traditions of the past, which for so long had been ignored.
4. Copeau, *Critiques d'un autre temps*, p. 239.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
6. Jourdain was asked to do the remodeling of the theatre.
7. Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau*, p. 119.
8. Jovet, Blanche Albane (Mme Duhamel), Gina Barbieri, Suzanne Bing, Jane Lory, Cariffa, Charles Dullin, Roger Karl, Armand Tallier, and Lucien Weber.
9. Ghéon, "Le Théâtre," in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, December 1, 1913, p. 347.
10. Roger Martin du Gard, "Louis Jovet," in *Programme (Athénée)*.
11. Duhamel, "Le Souvenir de Louis Jovet," in *France-Illustration*, September 1, 1951.
12. Blanche Albane (Mme Georges Duhamel to author, 1952).
13. Copeau, *Souvenirs du Vieux-Colombier*, p. 25.
14. Ghéon, "Le Théâtre," *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, December, 1913, p. 975.
15. Lucien Aguetand to author, 1952.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Claude Roger-Marx, "Les Fils Louverné," *Comoedia-Illustré* November 20, 1913, p. 197.
18. *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, I-II (1952) 93.
19. Lucien Aguetand to author, 1952.
20. "La Jalousie du Barbouillé," *Comoedia-Illustré*, February 20, 1914.
21. Jovet had designed the set and the costumes for the 1911 production; these were lent to Copeau by Jacques Rouché for the latter one. Since Copeau was staging many plays at this period, the fact that the costumes did not have to be made or refashioned at the sewing shops of the Vieux-Colombier lightened the cost and task for the producer. Jacques Rivière, "Les Frères Karamazov," in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, May 1, 1911.
22. Roussou, "Les Frères Karamazov," in *Choses de Théâtre*, I (1922), 240.
23. *Mercure*, *Mercure de France*, April 16, 1914.
24. John Drinkwater became famous after the publication of his play *Abraham Lincoln* in 1918.
25. Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau*, p. 46.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

27. "French Plays in London," the London Times, March 30, 1914.
28. *Mercure*, *Mercure de France*, April 16, 1914.
29. Copeau, *Souvenirs du Vieux-Colombier*, p. 35.
30. Schlumberger, "Le Théâtre," in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, July 1, 1914.
31. Copeau, *Souvenirs du Vieux-Colombier*, p. 37.
32. Claude Roger-Marx, "La Nuit des Rois," in *Comoedia-Illustré*, June 15, 1914.
33. Schlumberger, "Le Théâtre," in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, July 1, 1914, p. 141.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 44-45.
35. Schlumberger, "Le Théâtre," in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, July 1, 1914, p. 141.
36. Claude Roger-Marx, "La Nuit des Rois," in *Comoedia-Illustré*, June 15, 1914, p. 806.
37. Schlumberger, "Le Théâtre," in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, July 1, 1914, p. 141.
38. Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau*, p. 62.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. Chancerel, "Jacques Copeau, l'oeuvre et l'esprit du Vieux-Colombier," in *La Revue des Jeunes*, March 15, 1935.
42. Georges Duhamel to author, 1952.
43. The troupe consisted of Romain Bouquet, Lucien Weber, Suzanne Bing, Valentine Tessier, and Jane Lory, besides several actors who had not played previously with them: Emile Chifoliau, André Chotin, Jean Sarment, Jacques Vildrac, René Bouquet, Lucienne Bogaert, Madeleine Geoffroy, François Gournac, Henri Dhurtal, Marcel Millet, Marcel Vallée, Paulette Noisieux, and Eugénie Nau.
44. Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau*, p. 83.
45. Jovet, in preface to *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, p. 20.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
49. *New York Times*, November 28, 1917.
50. Louis Defoe, "French Theatre Begins with Queer Ceremonies," *New York World*, November 28, 1917.
51. Hornblow, "Mr. Hornblow goes to the Play," in *Theatre Magazine*, January 1918, p. 21.
52. *New York Times*, December 6, 1918.
53. Hornblow, *Theatre Arts*, April, 1919, p. 206.
54. Phelps, *The 20th Century Theatre*, p. 53.
55. Jovet played the part of Louis Thieux in *Les Mauvais Bergers*, the Marquis de Keergazon in *La Petite Marquise*, and Trielle in *La Paix chez Soi*.
56. Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau*, 89.

57. Seligmann, in "The Play: Two Comedies at a French Theatre," *The Globe and Commercial Advertiser*, March 6, 1918.

58. During the first season, Jovet created the sets for *Le Carrosse du Saint Sacrement*, *Les Mauvais Bergers*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *La Première surprise de l'Amour* by Marivaux. He designed the décors for the following plays: *Crainquebille*, *Le Voile du Bonheur*, *Rosmersholm*, *Les Caprices de Marianne*, *Les Romanesques*, *Boubouroche*, *Chatterton*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Washington*, *La Coupe enchantée*, and *Le Misanthrope*. Louis Defoe, "A Season of Farewell Plays," *New York World*, March 24, 1918.

59. Lucien Aguetand to author, 1952.

60. *New York Times*, October 22, 1918.

61. *Ibid.*, October 29, 1918.

62. Jovet, "A l'Ombre de Molière," *Conférenca*, October 15, 1947.

63. *Ibid.*

64. Schlumberger, "Le Médecin Malgré Lui," in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, December 1, 1920, p. 958.

65. Corbin, *New York Times*, December 17, 1918.

66. Gabriel Boissy, "Le Misanthrope au Vieux-Colombier," *Le Théâtre*, March, 1922, p. 152.

67. *Ibid.*

68. Lucien Aguetand to author, 1952.

69. Mme Dussane to author, 1952.

70. Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau*, p. 119-20.

71. Jovet, "Success, the Theatre's Only Problem," *Theatre Arts*, May, 1936.

72. "Conte d'Hiver," *Le Théâtre et Comoedia Illustré*, No. 383 (1920). p. 20.

73. Ghéon, "Le Théâtre," *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, March 1, 1920, p. 461.

74. Mauriac, "Courrier Théâtral," *Revue Hebdomadaire*, April, 1920, p. 538.

75. Copeau, *Programme (Cromedeyre-le-Vieil)*, 1920.

76. Woolcott, "Second Thoughts on First Nights," *New York Times*, August 15, 1920.

77. Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau*, p. 105.

78. Valéry Larbaud, Paul Valéry, André Gide, Benjamin Crémieux, Albert Thibaudet, Jacques Rivière, Edmond Jaloux, and Henri Ghéon, to mention but a few.

79. The teachers and the technical advisers were: Jacques Copeau, Jules Romains, Georges Chennevière, Louis Jovet, Suzanne Bing, the Fratellini brothers, André Bacqué, Romain Bouquet, Georges Vitray, Mme Jane Bathori, Louis Brochard, Albert Marque, and Mlle Marthe Esquerré.

80. Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau*, p. 107.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

82. Aguetand to author, 1952.
83. *Ibid.*
84. *Ibid.*
85. Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau*, p. 111.
86. There were two outstanding stage sets in this play—the black and gold furniture in the private study of the first act, and the green lawn and fog-covered pond in the second. Lucien Aguetand to author, 1952.
87. "L'Amour, Livre d'Or," *Le Théâtre*, March 1922, p. 164.
88. *Ibid.*, July, 1922, p. 11.
89. *Ibid.*

#### BECOMING A MASTER

1. Juvet, *Témoignages*, p. 99.
2. Lucien Aguetand to author, 1952.
3. Hébertot to Aguetand in a letter, September 2, 1922 (unpublished).
4. Juvet, "Success, the Theatre's Only Problem," *Theatre Arts*, XX (1936), 354.
5. Lucien Aguetand to author, 1952.
6. Véber, "M. Le Trouhadec Saisi par la Débauche," *Le Petit Journal*, March 15, 1923.
7. Boissard, "Chronique Dramatique," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, March 24, 1923.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Ligné-Poë, "Coup d'Oeil sur la Semaine," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, March 24, 1923.
10. Juvet to Aguetand in a letter, August 22, 1923 (unpublished).
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. "La Journée des Aveux," *Le Théâtre*, December, 1923, p. 272.
15. Juvet, *Témoignages*, p. 98.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
20. Romains, *Knock*, Act I, scene 1.
21. Guth, "Quand Juvet répète," *Revue de Paris*, February, 1949.
22. Juvet, *Témoignages*, p. 115.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
27. Romains, "Louis Juvet," in *Programme*, January, 1938.
28. Juvet, *Témoignages*, p. 104.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

30. Hilippon, "Quand Knock Était Pharmacien," *Candide*, July 4, 1935.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Programme (Knock)*.
33. Juvet, *Témoignages*, p. 105.
34. *Programme (Knock)*.
35. *Paris Soir*, December 27, 1930.
36. Dherelle, "Lorsque Louis Juvet, pendant l'entr'acte continue à jouer les médecins," *Paris Soir*, December 27, 1930.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. Bourcier, *Oeuvre*, September 7, 1924.
40. "R. C.," *Comoedia*, September 16, 1924.
41. Copeau, "Accord Jacques Copeau-Louis Juvet," *Comoedia*, September 17, 1924.
42. Le Fèvre, *Intransigent*, September 18, 1924. Juvet took into his troupe some of the finest actors of the Vieux-Colombier: Romain Bouquet, Valentine Tessier, Jane Lory, Georges Vitray, Albert Savry, and Jean le Goff.
43. Copeau, letter, *Programme*, September 23, 1924.

#### TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

1. Juvet, *Témoignages*, p. 20.
2. *Comoedia*, October 8, 1924.
3. "La Scintillante" (review), *Le Théâtre Comoedia-Illustré*, December 15, 1924.
4. Claude Roger-Marx, "La Scintillante" (review), *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, XXIII (1924).
5. Scize, "Un Grand Comédien Louis Juvet," *L'Alsace Lorraine*, December 22, 1923.
6. Juvet, "Technique du Théâtre," January 26, 1926 (unpublished).
7. Craig, *On the Art of the Theatre*, p. 5.
8. Kessel, "Au long des quais avec Juvet," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, January 1924.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. Marcel Achard to author, 1952.
12. Savoir, *Comoedia*, December 10, 1924.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Berton, "Les Visages de la Comédie," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, February 14, 1925.
15. Gignoux, *Comoedia*, February 1, 1925.
16. Liauser, "Le règne des Huissiers," *Comoedia*, April 2, 1925.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Colanerie, "L'Incident de la Comédie des Champs-Élysées," *Comoedia*, April 3, 1925.

19. *Ibid.*
20. Antoine, "S. O. S.," *Journal*, April 4, 1925.
21. Jouvot, *Réflexions*, p. 157.
22. It is interesting to note that *Tripes d'Or* was translated into Russian and produced in Moscow with considerable success.
23. Jouvot, *Témoignages*, p. 99.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
25. Charles Vildrac to author, 1952.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. Billy, "Théâtre: Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, November 1, 1925.
29. *Ibid.*
30. Crémieux, "Le Théâtre," *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, XXV (1925).
31. Billy, "Théâtre: Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, November 1, 1925, p. 766.
32. Bernard Zimmer to author, 1952.
33. Brisson, *Le Temps*, May 8, 1926.
34. Jouvot to Aguetand in a letter, November 22, 1928 (unpublished).
35. Zimmer to author, 1952.
36. Jouvot to Bost in a letter, August 14, 1925 (unpublished).
37. *Deux Paires d'Amis* opened together with a revival of Mérimée's *Le Carrosse du Saint Sacrement*. Louis Jouvot played the part of the Evêque de Lima, the same role he had performed when the play was first given at the Vieux-Colombier.
38. Bost to author, 1952.
39. *Programme*, 1926.
40. *Chantecler*, October 16, 1926.
41. Paul Achard, in *Programme (Le Dictateur)*, 1926.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Liberté*, October 6, 1926.
45. Rey, "Le Dictateur," *Comoedia*, October 7, 1926.
46. Marquetty, *Mon Ami Jouvot*, p. 94.
47. Included in their repertoire were the following plays: *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Les Bas-fonds*, *Medée*, *Le Cadavre Vivant*, *Le Jardin des Cerises*, *Le Mariage*, *Chirurgie*, *La Demande en Mariage*, *Jubilé*, *La Veille du Jugement*. *La Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, I-II (1952). 46.
48. Marquetty, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
50. *Comoedia*, May 29, 1926.
51. Marquetty, *Mon Ami Jouvot*, p. 100.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
53. Rivollet, "Le public aime l'imprévu," *Intransigeant*, February 6, 1927.
54. *Programme*, (*Outward Bound*), 1926.



55. Lièvre, "Théâtre: Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, March 15, 1934.
56. Liauser, "Comment on fait des vagues avec... des élastiques," *Comoedia*, December 31, 1926.
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*
59. Juvet to Aguetand in a letter, Saturday, 1925 (unpublished).
60. Reboux, "Au Grand Large," *Paris-Soir*, December 29, 1926.
61. *Gaulois*, December 29, 1926.
62. "A propos du Révizor," *Rappel*, June 12, 1927.
63. *Paris Midi*, December 20, 1926.
64. *Gaulois*, December 29, 1926.
65. Rivollet, *Intransigent*, February 6, 1927.
66. *Programme (Le Révizor)*, 1927.
67. Gosset in *Programme (Le Révizor)*, 1927.
68. *Ibid.*
69. Flers, *Le Figaro*, April 25, 1927.
70. "A propos du Révizor," *Rappel*, June 12, 1927.
71. *Ibid.*
72. Rey, *Comoedia*, April 6, 1927.
73. *Ibid.*
74. Flers, *Le Figaro*, April 25, 1927.
75. *Ibid.*
76. Berton, "Les Visages de la Comédie," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, April 23, 1927.
77. "Louis Juvet nous parle de son Théâtre," *Le Soir*, February 2, 1928.
78. Stuart, "Léopold le Refusé," *Le Soir*, October 19, 1927.
79. Juvet to Sarment in a letter, November 4, 1926 (unpublished).
80. Juvet to Sarment in a letter, *Entr'acte*, 1927.
81. *Ibid.*
82. "Chronique Dramatique du Figaro," *Le Figaro*, October, 1927.
83. Brisson, *Le Temps*, October 17, 1927.
84. Vildrac to author, 1952.
85. *Ibid.*
86. Juvet to Sarment in a letter, August 3, 1928 (unpublished).
87. Zimmer, "La création d'une pièce dans un théâtre d'avant-garde," *Conférenca*, April 5, 1927.
88. Carr, "Les Quatre," *Theatre Arts*, March, 1929.
89. *La Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, I-II (1952), 49.
90. Carr, "Les Quatre," *Theatre Arts*, March, 1929.
91. Wissant, *Volonté*, January 29, 1928.
92. Noziere, *Avenir*, January 27, 1928.
93. Ginisty, "Les Quatre et la Critique," *Comoedia*, March 20, 1928.
94. Wissant, *Volonté*, January 29, 1928.
95. Zimmer to author, 1952.

96. Brisson, *Le Temps*, April 2, 1928.
97. Paul Achard, *Presse*, March 29, 1928.
98. Dubech, *Candide*, April 2, 1928.
99. Zimmer, *Paris Soir*, March 26, 1928.
100. *Ibid.*
101. Boll, *Paris Soir*, March 31, 1928.
102. *Ibid.*
103. *Ibid.*
104. Brisson, *Le Temps*, April 2, 1928.
105. Antoine, *Information*, April 2, 1928.
106. Zimmer, *Information*, April 9, 1928.
107. Antoine, *Information*, April 9, 1928.
108. *Ibid.*

#### JOUVET AND GIRAUDOUX

1. Giraudoux, *Littérature*, p. 222.
2. Antoine, *Information*, May 4, 1932.
3. *La Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, I-II (1952), 51.
4. Barreyre, *Candide*, May 24, 1928.
5. Giraudoux, "Pourquoi j'ai écrit Siegfried," *Paris-Soir*, April 30, 1928.
6. *La Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, I-II (1952), 1951.
7. Ambrière, "Les Grandes Premières," *Les Annales. Conférence*. January, 1952.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Barreyre, *Candide*, May 24, 1928.

10. Giraudoux also cut out essentials, such as the conversation between Fontgeloy, Schmeck, and Muck which took place in scene 1 of Act II. And in Act III, instead of including seven rather picturesque scenes, he wrote two long and poignant ones, interrupted seven times by the entrances and exits of characters; so a certain amount of diversity was assured in this new continuity.

It is interesting to compare the lines Giraudoux had originally written for Fontgeloy with those actually spoken in the final version of the play. In the first version his lines are dull, lacking in interest. Scene 1, Act II was cut out at Jouvét's suggestion, and Fontgeloy made his first appearance in scene 4, Act II. Scene 4 of Act II corresponded, in the original version, with scene 6 of Act II. One may compare one of Zelten's speeches in Act I, scene 3 of the original version with the one which appeared in scene 2 of Act I in the definitive play. The lines beginning "Siegfried a de plus hauts soutiens..." which appeared in scene 3 Act I, of the original script, were entirely eliminated on opening night.

In the definitive version, Act I scene 1 became scene 5 of Act I.

Scene 4 of the original version became scene 3 of the definitive version in Act II. (*Le Théâtre Complet de Jean Giraudoux, Variantes I.*)

11. Ambrière, "Les Grandes Premières," *Les Annales. Conférenciâ*, January, 1952.

12. Jeanne Lanvin, Giraudoux's friend, created costumes for Valentine Tessier and Lucienne Bogaert. Camille Cipra assisted Jouvet in the creation of stage sets and costumes. Because funds were low, old sets were used, with necessary alterations. Cipra's contribution to the decor in Act I was a backdrop, representing the city of Gotha. *Ibid.*

13. Pierre Renoir had just finished playing in *Les Marchands de Gloire* by Marcel Pagnol and Paul Nivoix.

14. Ambrière, "Les Grandes Premières," *Les Annales. Conférenciâ*, January, 1952.

15. Jouvet cast the play as follows: Valentine Tessier as Genèvieve, Lucienne Bogaert as Eva, Gabrielle Calvi as Mme Patchkoffer, Odette Mouret as Mme Joepfl; Pierre Renoir as Siegfried, Louis Jouvet as Fontgeloy, Michel Simon as Pietri, Romain Bouquet as Robineau, August Boverio as Zelten, Jim Gerald as Waldorf, Paul Delauzac as Ledingger, Robert Moor as Schumann and Kratz, Paul Maraval as Muck and Sergeant, Alexandre Rignault as Schupo and Schmidt, and Jean Vallauris as Meyer.

16. Edouard Bourdet, "Le Théâtre de Giraudoux," *Collection Comoedia*, p. 11.

17. Rouveyre, "Théâtre: Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, July 1, 1928.

18. Amrière, "Les Grandes Premières," *Les Annales. Conférenciâ*, January, 1952.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *La Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, I-II (1952), 51.

21. Crémieux, "Le Théâtre," *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, June 1, 1928.

22. *Candide*, May 24, 1928.

23. Jaccopozzi was a lighting specialist in Paris. Jouvet to Aguetand in a letter, July 26, 1928 (unpublished). Written from the Hotel de la Poste-Egletons, Correze, Massif Central.

24. Rey, *Comoedia*, January 31, 1929.

25. Maurice Martin du Gard, "Suzanne," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, February 2, 1929.

26. Jouvet to Sarment in a letter from the Haute-Savoie, 1929 (unpublished).

27. Jouvet to Aguetand in a letter, April 8, 1923 (unpublished).

28. Marcel Achard to author, 1952.

29. *Journal*, April 20, 1929.

30. Strowski, *Européen*, April 27, 1929.

31. Jouvet dyed his hair blond for this part to bring out the purity of the character.

32. Rey, "Jean de la Lune," *Comoedia*, April 18, 1929.

33. Brisson, *Le Temps*, April 22, 1929.

34. *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, October 19, 1929.

35. Among the most prominent signatories were: Gaston Baty, Gérard Bauer, Edouard Bourdet, Paul Claudel, Jean Cocteau, Jean Giraudoux, H.-R. Lenormand, Roger Martin du Gard, Maurice Martin du Gard, François Mauriac, Louis Jouvet, Henri de Montherlant, Georges and Ludmilla Pitoëff, Jules Romains and Bernard Zimmer.

36. *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, October 19, 1929.

37. Copeau was not appointed in 1929. He was in 1940, however, when Edouard Bourdet, the then director, was severely injured in an automobile accident and was obliged to resign on May 12, 1940. He occupied this post only long enough to produce a few plays, among which were: *Le Paquebot Tenacity* by Charles Vildrac and *Twelfth Night* by Shakespeare (trans. Lascaris). The Vichy government knew that Copeau was not on its side (Pascal, Copeau's son, was active in the Resistance) and so presented an ultimatum; either Pascal sever his relations with the underground or he, Copeau, resign his post. On March 6, 1941, Copeau resigned and left for Pernand-Vergelesses in Bourgogne. Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau*, p. 207.

38. Giraudoux, *Littérature*, p. 222.

39. Maurice Martin du Gard, "Le Théâtre," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, November 9, 1929.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Giraudoux, *Littérature*, p. 222.

42. Rouveyre, "Théâtre: Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, December 15, 1929.

43. Sée, *Oeuvre*, December 9, 1929. *Amphitryon 38* opened on November 8, 1929. In 1934 it was revived, but this time the stage sets were differently conceived, and the costumes and décor were more luxurious and perhaps more artistic. Giraudoux also altered Act III, especially pleasing the critic Maurice Martin du Gard. (Maurice Martin du Gard, "Le Théâtre," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, October 13, 1934.)

44. Brisson, *Le Temps*, May 5, 1930.

45. D'Houville, *Figaro*, May 9, 1930.

46. Bidou, "Chronique Dramatique," *Journal des Débats*, May 5, 1930.

47. Barreyre, *Ric et Rac*, May 3, 1930.

48. Pierre Brisson, *Le Temps*, May 5, 1930.

49. *Ibid.*

49. Jouvet was so anxious to achieve this brilliant effect that during one rehearsal he told the electrician that "60,000 bougies" did not suffice. *Ibid.*

50. Rateau, *Volonté*, April 29, 1930.

51. Jouvet to Sarment in a letter, August 18, 1930 (unpublished).

52. Larkin, "Two French Directors and their Two Theatres," *Theatre Arts*, XV, January, 1931.

53. *Comoedia*, October 24, 1930.

54. Larkin, "Two French Directors and their Two Theatres," *Theatre Arts*, XV, January, 1931.

56. *Donogoo-Tonka* is now part of the permanent repertory of the Comédie-Française.

57. Beauplan, *Petite Illustration*, February 7, 1931.

58. From February 3d until the 9th the troupe performed the five above mentioned plays at the Celestins Théâtre in Lyon; on the 10th, 11th and 12th, the same works were given at the Théâtre du Gymnase in Marseille; from the 13th to the 19th, at the Nouveau Casino in Nice; from the 21st to the 26th at the Teatro di Torino in Turin and from February 23d to the 5th of March, at the Valle in Rome; on the 7th and 8th at the Academia dei Selenti in Florence; from the 10th to the 15th at Milan, either at the Manzoni or at the Sinodramatici theatre; on the 16th of March, at the Stade-Theatre in Zurich and on the 17th, 18th and 19th at the Comédie de Genève; on the 21st, at the Cercle Royal in Antwerp and from the 23d to the 31st of March in Brussels, at the Galeries Saint-Hubert. There were 60,000 kilos of sets, costumes and other equipment. (Blanquet, "En regardant Louis Jouvet et sa compagnie faire leurs malles," *Paris Soir*, January 11, 1931).

59. *Paris Soir*, February 23, 1931.

60. "Le Théâtre de Louis Jouvet à l'étranger," *Le Mois*, IV (1931), 20.

61. *Ibid.*

62. P. R.-L., *Journal de Genève*, March 19, 1931.

63. *Matin-Belge*, March 23, 1931.

64. Rivollet, "Quelle est l'atmosphère des salles de théâtre en Italie?" *Intransigeant*, April 5, 1931.

65. Rousseau, *Je suis Partout*, April 18, 1931.

66. *Ibid.*

67. During Jouvet's absence from Paris, he had rented the Comédie des Champ-Élysées to Gérard Bauer who produced A. Pascal's *Un Grand Patron*.

68. Maurice Martin du Gard, "L'Eau Fraîche," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, May 30, 1931.

69. Lièvre, "Théâtre: Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, December 1, 1931.

70. Boissy, *Comoedia*, October 30, 1931.

71. *Ibid.*

72. Maurice Martin du Gard, "Le Théâtre," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, November 21, 1931.

73. Rostand, *Le Soir*, December 1, 1931.

74. *The Journals of André Gide*, III, 193.

75. Lièvre, "Théâtre: Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, December 1, 1931.

76. Rey, *Comoedia*, October 30, 1931.

77. *Ibid.*

78. This is a partial list: L'Union Foraine de Paris, L'Union Artistique de France, L'Union des Artistes de Langue Française, le Syndicat des Artistes et Musiciens de Paris et de la Région Parisienne, l'Union Théâ-

trale des Grands Hôtels, la Société des Spectacles Modernes, l'Association des Comédiens Combattants, l'Association de la Critique Dramatique et Musicale, l'Association des Artistes Lyriques des Théâtres, l'Association Professionnelle des Directeurs de Théâtre de Province, l'Association des Médecins de Théâtres, l'Association de Secours Mutuels des Artistes Dramatiques, La Boite à Sel, Association des Contrôleurs de Théâtre, l'Association Amicale des Administrateurs de Théâtre et Spectacle de Paris, Les Prévoyants du Théâtre, Les Amis du Châtelet, ceux de l'Odéon, la Société des Habilleuses, La Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques, La Société du Droit d'Auteur, L'Association des Régisseurs de Théâtre, etc. Jouvet, "Le Théâtre affaire d'état ou pour une corporation du théâtre," *Le Temps*, July 31, 1933.

79. Lièvre, "Théâtre: Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, December 1, 1931.

80. *Ibid.*

81. Jouvet, "Le Théâtre affaire d'état ou pour une corporation du théâtre," *Le Temps*, July 31, 1933.

82. Daix, *Echo*, October 20, 1931.

83. *Paris Midi*, November 31, 1931.

84. Boissy, *Comoedia*, November 6, 1931.

85. Humbourg, "Louis Jouvet," *La Femme de France*, November 29, 1931.

86. *Ibid.*

87. Jouvet was to play the leading role in the successful movie version of *Topaze*. Bing, "Louis Jouvet," *Fantasio*, April, 1932.

88. Lièvre, "Théâtre. Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, December 1, 1931.

89. Boll, *Volonté*, March 5, 1933.

90. Boissy, *Comoedia*, March 2, 1933.

91. D'Houville, *Le Figaro*, March 3, 1933.

92. Dherelle, *Paris Soir*, April 2, 1933. *Intermezzo* was one of Jouvet's favorite plays and he could never understand why it was unsuccessful.

93. Lefèvre, "La Situation actuelle du Théâtre," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, April 1, 1933.

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Ibid.*

96. Jouvet, "Le Théâtre affaire d'état," *Le Temps*, July 31, 1933.

97. *Ibid.*

98. Barreyre, "Un beau théâtre va se fermer: celui de Louis Jouvet," *Le Jour*, October 14, 1933.

99. *Le Temps*, December 11, 1933.

100. Marcel Achard to author, 1952.

101. Cocteau, "Ce qu'est la Machine Infernale," *Echo*, April 11, 1934.

102. Jouvet, "Christian Bérard," *Programme (La Machine Infernale)*, 1934.

103. Thomas, "Christian Bérard," *Revue Encyclopédique, Laroussé Mensuel*, April, 1949.

104. Jouvét, "Christian Bérard," *Programme (La Machine Infernale)*, 1934.

105. Bellessort, "La Semaine Dramatique," *Journal des Débats*, April 16, 1934.

106. Brisson, *Le Temps*, April 16, 1934.

107. Marcel Achard to author, 1952.

108. Paul Achard, "Ne nous décourageons pas, nous dit Louis Jouvét," *Ami du Peuple*, February 25, 1934.

### THE GREAT PERIOD

1. Jouvét, *Réflexions*, p. 211.

2. *Paris Soir*, May 29, 1934.

3. Novy, "Quand on quitte un théâtre," *Jour*, May 29, 1934.

4. *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, I-II (1952) 59.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Valentine Tessier left Jouvét's troupe after the production of *Amphitryon 38*.

7. *The Constant Nymph*, a novel by Margaret Kennedy, had been adapted for the English stage by Basil Dean and given its first performance at the New Theatre in London. Noel Coward played the role of Lewis Dodd and Edna Best that of Tessa. Several years later Basil Dean made a silent film of this novel with Elisabeth Bergner in the role of Tessa. In 1932, he made a talking film of it with Victoria Hopper and Brian Aherne as the stars. Colin, "Du roman à Louis Jouvét," *Programme (Tessa)*, 1934.

8. Jouvét's lighting for *Tessa* was quite unusual. The atmosphere in Act I was bright and tender, reflecting both the delicate nature of Tessa's character and her precarious state of health. The lights came from tubes of mercury of various forms, which had been manufactured for Jouvét by the Verrerie Scientifique, specialists in this type of lighting.

9. Maurice Martin du Gard, "Le Théâtre," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, November 17, 1934.

10. Blanquet, "Louis Jouvét, professeur au Conservatoire," *Le Journal*, October 14, 1934.

11. Novy, "Louis Jouvét, professeur au Conservatoire," *Le Jour*, October 13, 1934. He had been permitted to sit in on some classes of Leloir, Sylvain, and Paul Mounet.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Jouvét's first class consisted of six boys and six girls. Renoir supplemented Jouvét's lectures with practical work.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Soko, "De la scène à l'écran," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, October 27, 1934.

16. *Ibid.*
17. Berger, "Louis Jouvet," *Excelsior*, April 27, 1935.
18. Treich, "Louis Jouvet," *Paris Soir*, August 28, 1936. The actor in question was Michel Simon.
19. Jouvet, *Réflexions*, p. 151.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 61-76.
27. Jose Neguer played the part of Paris, Madeleine Ozeray that of Helen, P. Morin was Ajax, P. Renoir was Ulysses.
28. During this period Jouvet was acting in a movie, *La Kermesse Héroïque (Carnival in Flanders)*. The movie was directed by Jacques Feyder. His conception was highly original; he was influenced in his cabaret scenes by Breughel, Jordaens, and Teniers; he owed a debt to Vermeer for the interiors. The scenario was very humorous, and the movie achieved wide success. *Le Mois*, December, 1935, p. 224.
29. Jouvet, "L'Interprétation dramatique," *L'Encyclopédie Française*, XVII (1935), 10-12.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Vandoyer, "L'Ecole des Femmes," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, May 16, 1936.
32. Lièvre, "Théâtre: Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, June 15, 1936.
33. Brisson, *Du Meilleur au Pire*, p. 45.
34. Lièvre, "Théâtre: Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, June 15, 1936.
35. Brisson, *Du Meilleur au Pire*, p. 44.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
37. Brisson, *Du Meilleur au Pire*, p. 45.
38. Dubech, *Candide*, 21 mai 1936.
39. Lièvre, "Théâtre: Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, June 15, 1936.
40. Bellessort, *Le Plaisir du Théâtre*, p. 32.
41. Sonrel, *Traité de Scénographie*.
42. Brisson, *Du Meilleur au Pire*, p. 43. Another innovation introduced by Jouvet, of which the audience was unaware, was an elevator installed inside Agnès' house. This enabled the actors to go up and down rapidly.
43. Jouvet to Bost in a letter, May 25, 1936 (unpublished).
44. *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, I-II (1952), 65.
45. *Journal Officiel*, August 19, 1936.



46. Barlatier, "Il faut adapter le théâtre aux temps modernes," *Comœdia*, July 28, 1936.

47. *Mr. Flow* was a mystery, the plot taken from a novel by Gaston Leroux and the scenario written by Henry Jeanson. It was fairly successful, but lacked dramatic intensity. Jovet made two movies in 1936: *Mister Flow* and *Les Bas-Fonds*.

48. Novy, "Stève Passeur chez Jovet," *Jour*, January 7, 1937.

49. Lièvre, "Théâtre: Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, April 1, 1937.

50. *L'illusion Comique* was written in 1636, and, when originally produced was fairly successful. In 1861 it was produced at the Comédie-Française under the direction of Edouard Thierry, who felt it necessary to notify the public beforehand of the liberties he felt obliged to take with the *mise en scène*. *L'illusion Comique* had not been staged since 1895, when Antoine produced it at the Odéon. Many critics complained of his ultra-realistic approach. Vittorio Rieti's music was a fitting accompaniment to the play and sustained its spirit admirably.

51. Lièvre, "Théâtre: Revue de la Quinzaine," *Mercure de France*, April 1, 1937, p. 358.

52. Mahelot, *Mémoire*.

53. Lièvre, *Le Jour*, February 16, 1937.

54. Jovet in *Programme (L'illusion Comique)*, 1937.

55. Doumic, "L'illusion de Corneille," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, March 1, 1937.

56. Lièvre, *Le Jour*, February 16, 1937.

57. Maurice Martin du Gard, "Le Théâtre," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, February 20, 1937.

58. Jovet to Giraudoux in a letter, no date (unpublished).

59. Jovet, "Molière," *Conférencia*, September 1, 1937, p. 282.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 290.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 292.

63. *Ibid.*

64. Jovet, "L'Interprétation de Molière," *Conférencia*, June 1, 1938, p. 665.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 667.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 668.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 670.

68. When Jovet thought he would write the book on Molière he asked actors and friends of the theatre to lend or give him documents. Poulain, "Jovet et Molière," *Candide*, January 11, 1939.

69. Giraudoux, *Le Figaro*, May 11, 1937.

70. Delpech, "Jovet illustre les mythes créés par Giraudoux," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, May 15, 1937.

71. *Ibid.*

72. Crémieux, "Le Théâtre," *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, June 1, 1937, p. 956.
73. Hélice, *Impressions*, June-July, 1937.
74. Bauer, *Echo de Paris*, May 17, 1937.
75. Frank, "Electre à l'Athénée," *Intransigeant*, March 23, 1937.
76. Warnold, "Louis Jovet nous parle de *L'Impromptu de Paris*," *Le Figaro*, November 30, 1937. Jovet meanwhile had completed six movies: *Mademoiselle Docteur*, *Un Carnet de Bal*, *Drôle de Drame*, *Forfaiture*, *Alibi*, and *La Marseillaise*. In *Un Carnet de Bal*, for the first and only time, Jovet recited poetry in pictures. It was a highly pessimistic and ironic poem by Verlaine, *Colloque Sentimental*, which expressed Jovet's own desolation of spirit.
77. *Ibid.*
78. Jovet to Giraudoux in a letter, 1937, (unpublished).
79. Jovet to Giraudoux in a letter, no date (unpublished).
80. Jovet, "Où va le Théâtre," *Paris-Soir*, January 10, 1938.
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Ibid.*
83. *Paris-Soir*, March 25, 1938.
84. Crémieux, *Lumière*, April 1, 1938.
85. Kemp, "Feuilleton du Journal Le Temps," *Le Temps*, March 28, 1938.
86. Giraudoux, "Louis Jovet et le Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui," *Beaux Arts*, January 28, 1938.
87. *Ibid.*
88. Jaubert, "Louis Jovet, magicien du décor," *Petit Parisien*, February 1, 1935.
89. Jovet, "Marivaux," *Conférenciá*, June 15, 1939, p. 30.
90. Le Sage, "Die Einheit von Fouqués Undine," *The Romanic Review*, XLII (1951), 122.
91. Audiat, *Paris-Soir*, May 4, 1939.
92. *Ibid.*
93. Haedens, *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, June 1, 1939, p. 1063.
94. "Feuilleton du Journal le Temps," *Le Temps*, May 8, 1939.
95. Edmond Sée, *L'Œuvre*, May 12, 1939.
96. Martin du Gard, "Le Théâtre," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, May 13, 1939.
97. Haedens, "Le Théâtre," *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, June 1, 1939, p. 1064.
98. Brassillach, *Animateurs de Théâtre*, p. 32.

#### THE WAR YEARS

- Jovet, "A mes Amis Latins," *America*, December 1945.
- Ondine* opened on March 23, and played on until the 15th of May. Jovet played the soldier Hans.

3. Triolet, "Sous l'Aile de Louis Jouvet," *Les Lettres Françaises*, August 23, 1951.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Jouvet, *Prestiges*, p. 10.
6. Jouvet to Brisson in a letter, Berne, May 2, 1941 (unpublished).
7. Louis Jouvet, *Prestiges*, p. 10.
8. Jouvet's cast consisted of the following: Alexandre Rignault, Romain Bouquet, Maurice Castel, André Moreau, Régis Outin, Paul Cambo, Stéphane Audel, Jacques Michel Clancy, Emmanuel Descalzo, Madeleine Ozeray, Raymone, Annie Cariel, Wanda Malachowska, Jacqueline Cheseaux, Micheline Buire-Clancy, and Elisabeth Prévost.
9. Jouvet, *Prestiges*, p. 21.
10. In the cast, however, there were some who wanted to return to France, namely: Raymone, Jacqueline Cheseaux, Charlotte Delbo (secretary), Alexandre Rignault, René Dalton (stage manager), and Elisabeth Prévost, who left the troupe in 1942. The following came from France to replace them: Jacques Thiéry, Léo Lapara, Monique Mélinand, Georgina Tisel, Catherine Moissan, Henriette Risner-Morineau, and Véra Lapara.
11. Louis Jouvet, *Réflexions*, p. 9.
12. He gave Brazilian, Portuguese, and Argentinian artists and composers the opportunity to help him: four artists, Eduardo Anahory, Joas-Maria Santos, Enrique Liberal, Ana-Ines Carcano and two composers, Paul Misraki and Renzo Massarani.
13. Jouvet, *Prestiges*, p. 26.
14. Jouvet, *Spectateur*, March 18, 1947.
15. Jouvet, *Prestiges*, p. 27.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
17. The electrical equipment and loudspeakers were also food for the flames.
18. Jouvet, *Prestiges*, p. 27.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
22. Jouvet, *Prestiges*, p. 36.
23. Jouvet, *Prestiges*, p. 40.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
25. The actors who withdrew were: Mme Catherine Moissan, Georgina Tisel; André Moreau, Paul Cambo, Régis Outin, Stéphane Audel (military reasons), Jacques Clancy (military reasons).
26. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
27. Maceron, "Retour de Louis Jouvet," *La Bataille*, February 22, 1945.
28. Jouvet, *Les Etoiles*, June 12, 1945.
29. Carat, "Louis Jouvet," *Monde Nouveau Paru*, No. 53 and 54, 1951.
30. Jouvet, *Prestiges*, p. 46.
31. Jouvet, *Prestiges*, p. 56.

## RECONQUERING THE PARISIAN PUBLIC

1. (Jouvet, "On est Metteur en scène comme on est amoureux," *Les Lettres Françaises*, August 23, 1951.)

2. Jouvet's children had grown up during his absence. His oldest daughter was now 33, his son was 29 and his younger daughter was 22. Although he had always been on good terms with his wife, she and Jouvet had been separated for many years, and she played no part whatsoever in his theatrical life.

3. When Jouvet produced *Ondine* in 1939, he altered the entire lighting effects the day before the opening.

4. Jouvet, "Dans les Yeux de Giraudoux," *Les Lettres Françaises*, May 14, 1945.

5. *Ibid.*

6. "Louis Jouvet cherche deux millions pour *La Folle de Chaillot*," *Paris Soir*, August 30, 1945.

7. *Le Figaro*, October 30, 1945.

8. Blanquet, *Courrier de Paris*, November 9, 1945.

9. Paquin, Lanvin and Patou made similar contributions to the production.

10. Warnold, "Louis Jouvet nous parle de *La Folle de Chaillot*," *Le Figaro*, Novembre 13, 1945.

11. Bourdet, "Visages de Jouvet," *Revue de Paris*, February, 1946.

12. Chambillon, *Mondes*, June 24, 1945.

13. The music was composed by Henri Sauguet.

14. The costumes were designed by Christian Bérard out of the relics given or sold to Jouvet.

15. Arnold, *L'Avenir du Théâtre*, p. 109.

16. Jouvet, *Témoignages*, p. 53.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

18. Bérard was sometimes so convinced of his lack of ability that he would refuse to design any stage sets. In the case of *L'École des Femmes*, he was so desperate for ideas that he wrote Jouvet a lengthy letter, declaring himself sterile in ideas and incapable of designing suitable sets for the play. Enclosed in the letter, however, was a rough sketch of the décor he visualized, which later was developed and used.

Bourdet, "Visages de Jouvet," *Revue de Paris*, February, 1946.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Bourdet, "Visages de Jouvet," *Revue de Paris*, February 1946.

21. The three Madwomen passed in a circle around the Madwoman of Chaillot's bed and the rest of the visitors walked in a concentric circle; this not only emphasized the circular aspect of this act but created a series of incessantly changing and highly colorful pictures of varied tones and harmonies.

Paul Guth, "Scènes de la vie théâtrale," *La Revue Théâtrale*, mai-juin 1946.

22. Mauchamps, *Spectateur*, November 26, 1945.

23. Gautier, *Le Figaro*, November 20, 1945.
24. Giraudoux, *La Folle de Chaillot*, p. 13.
25. Mauchamps, *Spectateur*, November 26, 1945.
26. Brunswick, *Pays*, December 13, 1945.
27. Mauchamps, *Spectateur*, November 26, 1945.
28. Haedens, *L'Epoque*, January 11, 1946.
29. Marcel, "La Folle de Chaillot," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, December 27, 1947.
30. Lang, *Concorde*, December 31, 1945.
31. Jovet-Demangeat, January 15, 1947, (unpublished).
32. Claude Dufresne, "Qu'est devenu le Cartel?," *Opéra*, July 30, 1947.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Thouret, "Culture et Prestige par Louis Jovet," *L'Enseignement*, May 15, 1945.
35. Gammond to author, 1952.
36. Thouret, "Culture et Prestige par Louis Jovet," *L'Enseignement*, May 15, 1945.
37. Claudel, "Une lettre de Claudel à Jovet," *Le Figaro*, June 4, 1946.
38. Claude Hervin, *Libération*, June 13, 1946.
39. Kemp, *Le Monde*, June 12, 1946.
40. Marcel, "L'Apollon de Marsac," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, May 1, 1947.
41. Maulnier, "Le Nouveau Spectacle de Louis Jovet," *Revue de la Pensée Française*, August 1947, p. 42.
42. Gabriel Marcel, *loc. cit.*
43. "Jovet a le goût du malheur," *Samedi Soir*, June 21, 1947.
44. Jovet made the following movies: in 1940, *Un Tel Père et Fils, Sérénade*; 1946, *Un Revenant, Copie Conforme*; 1947, *Quai des Orfèvres*.
45. Jovet, *Témoignages*, p. 124.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Jovet, "Acteur de Théâtre," February 1950 (unpublished).
48. Jovet, *Témoignages*, p. 34.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

#### JOUVET AND MOLIERE

1. Jovet, *Ecoute mon Ami*, p. 33.
2. Jovet's lectures at the Conservatoire (unpublished).
3. *Ibid.*
4. Jovet, *Préface aux Œuvres de Molière*, 1952.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Jovet, "A l'Ombre de Molière," *Conférenca*, October 15, 1947.
7. Jovet, *Préface aux Œuvres de Molière*, 1952.
8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*
10. Jovet, *Témoignages*, p. 96.
11. Jovet, "De Molière à Giraudoux," *Conférenciac*, August 15, 1946.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Jovet, *Témoignages*, p. 178.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
16. Jovet, *Témoignages*, p. 19.
17. Novy, *Le Spectateur*, December 23, 1947.
18. Jovet returned to the original spelling of *Dom Juan*.
19. Jovet, *Témoignages*, p. 61.
20. Alter, *Le Figaro*, December 20, 1947.
21. Jovet was the sixteenth actor to undertake the role of Dom Juan. Among his eminent predecessors were Robert Kemp, who played Dom Juan at the Odéon in 1841; Boccage in 1843; Valbelle in 1879; André Calmettes in 1886; Marquet in 1905; and Jean Dubucourt in 1922. At the Comédie-Française, Dom Juan was played by Geoffroy in 1847, Bressant in 1868, Raphael Duflos in 1907, and Maurice Escande in 1925.
22. Jovet, "A propos du *Dom Juan* de Molière," *Occident*, December 20, 1947.
23. Maulnier, *Le Figaro Littéraire*, February 21, 1948.
24. *Carrefour*, December 31, 1947.
25. Michel Etcheverry to author, 1952.
26. Ambrière, *Opéra*, December 31, 1947.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Dussane, "Dom Juan de Molière, mise en scène de Louis Jovet," *Mercure de France*, March 1, 1948, p. 511.
29. Brasillach, *Animateurs de Théâtre*, p. 45.
30. Ambrière, *Opéra*, December 31, 1947.
31. Marcel, "Dom Juan," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, January 8, 1948.
32. *Ibid.*
33. A. F., "Christian Bérard répond aux critiques de Dom Juan," *L'Œuvre*, January 23, 1948.
34. Many critics found grave fault with Jovet's directing. Paul Gaillard felt that Sganarelle's sneezing at the beginning and end of the play was ridiculous (Gaillard, *Les Lettres Françaises*, January 1, 1948). He added that Dom Louis' reproaches in Act IV, scene 4, should not have been pronounced while among a group of joking young valets. Thirdly, when Elvire came to warn and plead with Dom Juan (Act IV, scene 4), she should not have been staring into the audience when speaking her lines, but rather talking to him.
- Francis Ambrière felt that the scene with M. Dimanche (Act IV, scene 3) was full of routine buffoonery and therefore lacked comic spontaneity. (Ambrière, *Opéra*, December 31, 1947). André Alter remarked that throughout the peasant scenes in Act II, Jovet and his cast spoke with a Marseillais accent, whereas Molière wrote the scenes in a conven-

tional jargon, which could be compared to the patois spoken in central or western France. (Altar, *L'Aube*, November 25, 1947).

Defending himself against this last criticism, Jovet replied that he feared that modern audiences would not believe in the authenticity of his peasants unless they spoke with a pronounced Marseillais accent. Besides, maintained Jovet, Molière placed this scene at a seashore, perhaps the Normandy coast or the South of France, in which case, Jovet's thesis would hold true. With the adoption of the Marseillais accent, he maintained that the scenes gained in variety and freshness. (Jovet, "Le Point de Vue du Metteur en Scène," *La Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, (IV, 1951).

35. Molière, *Dom Juan*, p. 213.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

37. Jovet, "Le Point de Vue du Metteur en Scène," *La Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre* (IV, 1951).

38. Bérard, "Christian Bérard répond aux Critiques de Dom Juan," *L'Œuvre*, January 23, 1948.

39. Ambrière, *Opéra*, December 31, 1947.

40. Gaillard, *Les Lettres Françaises*, January 1, 1948.

41. Molière, *Dom Juan* (Act I, scene 2), p. 173.

42. Marcel, "Dom Juan," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, January 8, 1948.

43. Gaillard, *Les Lettres Françaises*, January 1, 1948.

44. Kemp, *Le Monde*, January 3, 1948.

45. Jovet, "Le Dom Juan de Molière retrouvera-t-il un public?," *Combat*, December 20, 1947.

46. Ambrière, *Opéra*, December 31, 1947.

47. In Egypt, Jovet and his troupe performed in Cairo and Alexandria. For Egyptian audiences they performed *L'École des Femmes*, *Dom Juan*, *Ondine*, and *Knock*; and an evening show consisting of three one-act plays: *L'Appollon de Marsac*, *Le Folle Journée*, *La Coupe Enchantée*. For the rest of his tour he performed only *L'École des Femmes*.

48. *France Dimanche*, April 14, 1948.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Cézán, "Jovet retrouve Paris," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, July 1, 1948.

51. *Ibid.*

52. Cézán, "Jovet retrouve Paris," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, July 1, 1948.

53. Valogne, "Jovet dit," *Arts*, February 4, 1949.

54. Guilly, *Combats*, February 6, 1949.

55. Cogniat, *Arts*, February 25, 1949.

56. Brisson, *Le Figaro Littéraire*, February, 1949.

57. Jovet, *Le Figaro Littéraire*, March 1, 1949.

58. Cézán, "De Molière à Giraudoux avec Louis Jovet," *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, October 28, 1948.

59. Georges Braque created the décor and the costumes with the as-

sistance of Deguilloux, Desbays, Demangeat, and Karinska. Molière, of course, never described the scene, but in Act II, Dorine states: "Madame will presently come into the room below." Jouvot and Braque therefore reasoned that the room in which the action took place was at ground level, or below, and consequently rather dark. Braque's fixed set consisted of a gray room with a black ceiling, from which hung a chandelier. On the rear flat was a tapestry, Louis XIV style, colored in two shades of dull gray. On either side of the room were two large windows and, in the rear, a double door, several *braque-yellow* chairs, and a dark green armchair.

In contrast to the dismal sets, the costumes were bright and colorful, with the exception of Tartuffe's. Dorine wore a yellow and brown dress with the lowest neckline of any costume in the play, thus justifying Tartuffe's lines: "Cover up that bosom, which I can't endure to look on" (Act III, scene 2). Elmire, played by Monique Mélinand, was dressed in a colorful striped dress to accentuate the corseted figure. For the last act, Elmire wore a dainty light blue gown. Marianne, played by Dominique Blanchard, was dressed in gray with converging blue stripes. Valère, the suitor, played by Jean Richard, wore the fanciest costume: blue with silver embroidery, and the most elegant wig. (Roderick Mac Arthur, "Georges Braque and the Tartuffe Tradition," *Theatre Arts*, April, 1950.) Braque intended to dress Tartuffe with more ecclesiastical austerity, but at Jouvot's request, lace cuffs, a velvet tie, a flowing cape, and a large hat were supplied.

60. Molière, *Tartuffe*, Act I, scene 2. (Brander Matthews, *The Chief European Dramatists*, Houghton Mifflin Co. 1916, N.Y.).

61. *Ibid.*, Act III, scene 6.

62. *Ibid.*, Act III, scene 7, p. 288.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

64. Jouvot, "Sur *Tartuffe*," December 2, 1950 (unpublished).

65. Duché, *Le Figaro Littéraire*, January 28, 1950.

66. Jean-Jacques Gautier, *Le Figaro*, January 27, 1950.

67. Lemarchand, *Combat*, January 27, 1950.

68. Jouvot placed the table under which Orgon hid in the center of the stage rather than to the right as had done his predecessors.

69. Maulnier, "Louis Jouvot suscite une Nouvelle Guerre de *Tartuffe*," *La Bataille*, January 31, 1950.

70. Triolet, *Les Lettres Françaises*, February 2, 1950.

71. Abram, *Libération*, January 28, 1950.

72. What disturbed Robert Kemp was the fact that the door placed at the rear of the stage assumed almost the importance of a principal, since Dorine kept opening and closing it so frequently. Robert Kemp, *Le Monde*, January 27, 1950.

73. Jouvot, "Le Point de Vue du Metteur en Scène," *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*. (IV), 1951.

74. Kemp, "Louis Jouvot," *Le Monde*, January 27, 1950.



75. Michel Etcheverry to author, 1952.
76. Dussane, "Tartuffe," *Mercur de France*, March 1, 1950, p. 510.
77. Maulnier, "Le Tartuffe de Louis Jouvet," *La Revue de la Pensée Française*, March, 1950.
78. Schwartzman to Jouvet in a letter, December 28, 1950.
79. Jouvet to Schwartzman in a letter, December 2, 1950 (unpublished).
80. Among the books Jouvet read at this period were: *War and Peace* by Tolstoi, *Corrida* by Paco Tolosa, *Conscience de Soi* by Lavelle, *Pensées Religieuses* by Hugo, *Life of St. Teresa*, *L'Imposture* by Bernanos, *L'Âme de la Danse* by Sazanova, the works of Renan, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Attente de Dieu* by Simone Weil, the works of Mathurin Regnier, *Asmodée* by Mauriac, *Rideau Baissé* by Baty, the correspondence of Dostoyevsky, *Voici L'Homme* by Suarès, *Propos sur L'Esthétique* by Alain, *L'Homme et sa Destinée* by Lecomte du Nouy, Saint Ignacius, an Anthology of Greek Poetry compiled by Brasillach, and the *Psychologie de l'Art* by Malraux.
81. Jouvet, *Le Figaro*, June 4, 1950.
82. Jouvet letter from Algiers, unpublished, 1950.
83. Duhamel, "Le Souvenir de Louis Jouvet", *France-Illustration*, September 1, 1951.
84. Jouvet-Etcheverry letter, August 9, 1950 (unpublished).
85. A. Willette, juin, 1914.
86. *Theatre Arts*, May 1951.
87. Madame Gammond to author, 1952.
88. Jean-Paul Sartre to author, 1952.
89. *Ibid.*
90. *Ibid.*
91. Michel Etcheverry to author, 1952.
92. Jouvet-Bost letter, February 24, 1951, (unpublished).
93. Jouvet-Bost letter, August 10, 1951 (unpublished).
94. Ambrière, "Pierre Renoir", *Conférencia*, April 1952.
95. Letter from Père Laval to Madame Dussane, August 30, 1951, (unpublished).
96. Carlier, *Combat*, August 22, 1951.
97. *Ibid.*

### CONCLUSION

1. Jouvet, *Réflexions*, p. 207.
2. Class notes of Jouvet at the Conservatoire.
3. Jouvet, *Ecoute mon Ami*, p. 65.



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ties and, as far as humanly possible, with a mind devoid of personal, literary, or historical preconceptions. He relied on his experience to assess for him the rhythms of the dialogue and the structure of the play. He did not hesitate to follow the dictates of his intuition, if need be, for he realized that the truths of the theatre are not rational truths." Because of his fresh approach, Jouvet infused the works of Molière with a vitality that made them live for a twentieth-century audience. Similarly, it was Jouvet's skillful direction that helped gain quick recognition for the subtle and enigmatic works of Giraudoux.

Working through the medium of his individual performances and productions—a method that is particularly appropriate for this dedicated artist—Mrs. Knapp has written a biography about which Michael Redgrave says: "If any actor ever deserved such a tribute as this book, it would not be one but several of the muses who would vote for Louis Jouvet."

Mrs. Knapp, who is a member of the French Department at Columbia University, studied at Lake Erie College, Barnard College, Columbia University, and the Sorbonne. She has based this book largely upon research done in Paris, where she interviewed personalities of the theatrical and literary world who knew Jouvet.

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